Commentary
September 2002

Going to War

In Praise of the Bush Doctrine
Norman Podhoretz

Defeating the Oil Weapon
R. James Woolsey

Can Any Good Come of Radical Islam?
Francis Fukuyama & Nadav Samin

Judaism Beyond Words: Part 2
David Gelernter

Victory for Vouchers?
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Daniel Johnson • Victor Davis Hanson

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Parental School Choice: Widespread — Unless You're Poor

In a new book, a prominent educator writes the following about school vouchers:

"As a practical matter, vouchers have their greatest appeal to inner city residents whose schools are often in deplorable condition. Middle-class families are more content with their schools and already have choice. They can afford to send their children to private school if need be."

The author? None other than Bob Chase, outgoing president of the nation's largest teachers union (*The New Public School Parent*, Penguin Original, August 2002).

Ironically, while Chase directed the National Education Association (NEA), no organization worked harder to keep low-income families from educational choices that most Americans take for granted. During these same years, census data show that large numbers of NEA members used private schools to avoid the "deplorable condition" in many big city schools.

The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) strongly supports the right of NEA parents — and all Americans — to decide where their children attend school. We are distressed and perplexed that teachers and their leaders apply one standard when it comes to their own children and a different one for less affluent families.

As the debate about educational options continues, BAEO will emphasize that there is nothing new or experimental about school choice. The simple truth remains: parental school choice is widespread — unless you're poor.

baeo

Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org or www.baeo.org

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Commentary®

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Commentary
September 2002

Letters from Readers

Trade vs. Security

To the Editor:

In his discussion of weapons proliferation and export controls, Gary Milhollin addresses issues of critical importance ["Trading with the Enemy," May]. Unfortunately, he makes several incorrect factual and legal assertions, leaving readers misinformed and undercutting his thesis that "the White House is now pushing a bill in Congress that would make it easier for terrorists and the nations that support them to obtain . . . weapons of mass destruction."

Commenting on this legislation, Mr. Milhollin states that it "would decontrol many of the same items that the Customs Service" currently places on a list of "most dangerous goods." He gives the example of high-precision electronic switches, and also asserts that, if enacted, the law would *require* the Secretary of Commerce to allow the export of rocket technology.

Mr. Milhollin is wrong on all counts. The bill before Congress does *not* mandate decontrol of any item. Instead, it instructs the Commerce Department to examine a series of factors to determine whether an item is eligible for decontrol. Indeed, Mr. Milhollin's own illustrations disprove his point.

Under the pending legislation, any item now covered by a multilateral export-control regime in which the U.S. is a member remains subject to controls. Thus, the status of the high-precision electronic switches to which Mr. Milhollin refers would be unaffected because, as he acknowledges, "for decades, these switches have been on the export-control list of the Nuclear Suppliers Group." Similarly, under its mass-market and foreign-availability tests, the bill allows the decontrol of restricted items only if there are comparable items available domestically or internationally that are of similar quality. The rocket technology Mr. Milhollin mentions would not be decontrolled because, as he states, what other countries sell is "far inferior to that which U.S. firms could supply."

Despite Mr. Milhollin's assertion that the pending legislation "makes no attempt to strike a balance between national security and freedom of trade," it provides several mechanisms that would prevent the export of an item deemed to threaten U.S. national security. For example, the bill refers all export-license applications to the Secretaries of Defense and State, and gives the Secretary of Defense explicit authority to help establish the list of items controlled for national-security reasons. It requires a license for any export if the Secretary of State determines that the item is destined for a country that supports international terrorism and would make a significant contribution to that country's military or terrorist potential. The bill also provides the President with the authority to control indefinitely, for reasons of national security, the export of any item, and it substantially enhances our export enforcement capabilities, including higher penalties for violators and new undercover authority for agents.

Apart from his discussion of the bill, Mr. Milhollin makes numerous other assertions that simply do not withstand scrutiny. He asserts, for example, that after September 11 the U.S. gave "a long list of Indian companies, plus a few in Pakistan . . . a green light to purchase dual-use equipment from the United States." He also states that these firms "have been cleared for sensitive American exports." But Mr. Milhollin has misunderstood the way American export controls are managed.

A few weeks after September 11, several Indian

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and Pakistani companies were indeed removed from the so-called "entities list." This simply meant that items *not* on a U.S. control list (such as office supplies and auto parts) could now be exported to them without a license. By contrast, items controlled for export to India and Pakistan would *still* require a license for shipment, with all such applications carefully reviewed and judged on a case-by-case basis. No "green lights" were given, and no company was "cleared" for sensitive American exports.

The subject of export controls is not amenable to quick analysis or simplistic assertions, and responsible individuals can certainly disagree on the pros and cons of the bill now before Congress. But this debate should be based on a fair statement of the law and the facts.

KENNETH I. JUSTER
Under Secretary
Bureau of Industry and Security
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

GARY MILHOLLIN writes:

Kenneth I. Juster's criticism of my article reveals that he has not read carefully the bill he is talking about. First, Mr. Juster argues that the bill "does not mandate decontrol of any item." In fact, the bill does just that. In section 211, it provides that the Secretary of Commerce "shall" decontrol any item that comes under the broad criteria for decontrol that the section contains. There is no discretion in the matter. As my article points out, the criteria are so sweeping that they would cover the special electronic switches used to detonate nuclear weapons and the high-strength steel that goes into missiles and plants to make nuclear-weapon fuel. Both the steel and the switches have been controlled for years, but because they meet the criteria in section 211, the Secretary of Commerce would have to decontrol them under the bill's language.

Second, Mr. Juster argues that the bill would allow an item to be decontrolled "only if there are comparable items available domestically or internationally that are of similar quality." But the bill does not say that, either. It allows decontrol under standards that are far looser. In fact, the language that Mr. Juster cites, which refers to comparable quality, comes from an amendment to the bill by the House Armed Services Committee *that his administration fought and still opposes*. Nor is it true, as Mr. Juster contends, that items covered by a multilateral export-control regime would remain subject to controls. For such items, the President is merely authorized to overturn the Commerce Secretary's decision to decontrol them. This will not happen unless George W. Bush decides to become an expert in electronic switches and high-strength steel.

Third, Mr. Juster argues that the bill gives the "Secretary of Defense explicit authority to help establish the list of items controlled." In fact, the bill allows the Pentagon to be consulted only when the Commerce Department, which has always been pro-trade, decides that it wants to add an item to the list—an event that is virtually certain not to happen. Mr. Juster's administration *fought and still opposes* an amendment by the House Armed Services Committee that would allow the Secretary of Defense to add items on his own.

Fourth, Mr. Juster argues that the bill requires an export license for items going to "a country that supports international terrorism." In fact, these terrorism controls release American technology to the entire planet except for the handful of officially-designated terrorist states. Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein could pick up one of these items, such as a satellite telephone, in a country like Jordan that is not on the terrorism list.

Finally, Mr. Juster argues that when his department dropped scores of Indian and Pakistani nuclear and missile-manufacturing sites from the U.S. export-control list, no "green lights" were given. In fact, dropping these firms allowed them to import powerful American equipment highly useful for bomb and missile making that they could not get before. An example is supercomputers. Indian and Pakistani nuclear-weapon design sites can now buy American supercomputers performing up to 190 billion operations per second, which they could not do previously. The new machines will help create more warheads, which will in turn increase the risk of incinerating millions of South Asians.

Unfortunately, the Commerce Department seems to have missed the lesson of September 11. This is not the time to help spread weapons of mass destruction. If we are worried about terrorists and the countries that support them, we must stop promoting trade at the expense of our security.

What Judaism Means

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter's fascinating article, "Judaism Beyond Words" [May], qualifies as neither history nor law (halakhah), but it makes sense of the subjective experience of contemporary Jews. This very subjectivity (e.g., seeing the two arms of the open Torah scroll as reminiscent of crossing the Red Sea between "two walls" of water), unhistorical and halakhically irrelevant though it is, provides an opportunity for reflection on the great themes of Judaism in a way that is compelling for Jews of this new century. Handled without adequate sensitivity, this impressionistic method can lead to inaccurate and even absurd results. Happily, Mr. Gelernter proves himself thoroughly sensitive, and the result is a method that speaks to us in our contemporary situation and yields a new understanding of ideas long embedded in Judaism.

True, one must beware of overstating the case for *havdalah*, or separation, the theme of Mr. Gelernter's first article. Despite all the material he marshals, there is a countervailing theme in Judaism, namely, *ichud* or connectedness. The most obvious example is love—of God (Deuteronomy 12:5), of neighbor (Deuteronomy 19:18), and of spouse (Genesis 2:18, 24). There is clearly a dialectic between the two themes, although the *havdalah* concept is perhaps more in need of emphasis—especially in our generation, in which "togetherness" is seen as an undisputed virtue and "separation" as a sign of bias and narrow-mindedness. Mr. Gelernter has achieved this masterfully.

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We should recall that the very first divine commandment to Abraham is one of separation. "*Lekh lekha*—get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). Judaism begins with his departure from the bustling pagan world into which he was born. The future of the Jewish people depends on how well we can manage separation as well as connection in our own world. For raising that issue alone, David Gelernter deserves our gratitude.

RABBI NORMAN LAMM
President
Yeshiva University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter beautifully captures the centrality of separation in Judaism. Yet Jewish thought also includes a contradictory strain relating to unity and wholeness. A midrash on the Creation story, for example, pictures the upper and lower waters weeping to be together again, not in order to return to chaos but to be reunited in God's presence.

The thrust toward unity appears even in regard to the Sabbath, the most separate of days. Building on the words "remember" and "observe" that appear in the two versions of the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8, Deuteronomy 5:12), the rabbis advise us to "remember" the Sabbath by bearing it in mind for three days after it has ended and to "observe" it by starting to prepare for it three days before it arrives. Instead of regarding the day as a gap in the week, they hoped to imbue the entire week with some of the day's sanctity.

Perhaps the significance of this impulse toward wholeness in Judaism is an extension of the meaning of holiness. On the biblical verse, "Make yourselves holy because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44), Mr. Gelernter relays the midrashic comment, "As I am separate, so you be separate." But another midrash says, "As He is gracious and compassionate, so you be gracious and compassionate." Holiness involves not only separations, but also reaching across the separations to extend grace and compassion to others. The ideas may be contradictory but they are not mutually exclusive; the Jewish people have been sustained both by their separateness from the world and by their connectedness to it.

FRANCINE KLAGSBRUN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

As usual, David Gelernter is right on the mark. With its integrative approach to *kedushah* (holiness) and *havdalah* (separation), "Judaism Beyond Words" might be a modern classic. His development of a literary and theological link between Creation and the Exodus and his explanation of the separateness involved in the Sabbath, the dietary laws, and the laws of family purity make the article profoundly useful for understanding Judaism.

At the risk of quibbling, I might question the appropriateness of Mr. Gelernter's attempt to connect the crossing of the Red Sea and the ritual of *hagbah* (raising an open Torah scroll) with the facades of the Central Synagogue in Manhattan and the Dohany Street synagogue in Budapest. The vertical spires of these two buildings are probably an accident of imitative architecture (following the precedent of churches and mosques) rather than intentional statements about separation.

It is obvious that Mr. Gelernter loves the Zohar, the key text of Jewish mysticism, and sees it as part of a basic trilogy of sacred literature that includes the Bible and the Talmud. But some would argue that Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* or his code of law are much more important religious statements than the Zohar, which is something of a closed book to most people. Jewish tradition advises studying the Zohar only after mastering the Bible and Talmud.

Recognizing this might have tempered Mr. Gelernter's claim that "Judaism is Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai." Some of us might not have chosen ben Yochai as our central figure. Hillel (who said "If I am only for myself, what am I?") or Rabbi Akiba (who said that the fundamental commandment in the Torah was "Love thy neighbor as thyself") might be deemed more central to Judaism than a man who secluded himself in a cave for thirteen years.

In the final analysis, Jews must learn to live apart from this world and at the same time strive to be a part of it. This method is one of separation rather than separatism—integration with the world without wholesale assimilation into it.

RABBI HASKEL LOOKSTEIN
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for David Gelernter's excellent treatment of holiness and separation. Withdrawal, understood in Jewish terms, significantly enhances both the performance of a *mitzvah* (commandment) and the person who performs it. One who observes the Sabbath by withdrawing from creativity and labor can better evaluate ordinary productivity. One who observes ritual family purity by withdrawing from the conjugal relationship can better assess the marital union. One who observes *kashrut* by withdrawing from nonkosher food can better judge his behavior as a consumer.

A society like ours is bent on smashing rules and selling rebellion. Marketers appeal to the public by declaring that their product knows no limits and breaks all boundaries. The absence of distinctions is especially visible on college campuses, where students are taught that no ethic can be considered superior to any other and that no one can draw moral lines. Judaism, by contrast, as Mr. Gelernter reminds us, constantly withdraws and separates and distinguishes. His refreshing voice speaks truth to our decayed popular culture.

RABBI ALLEN SCHWARTZ
Congregation Ohab Zedek
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter's splendid exposition on the place of separateness in Judaism is the most lucid I have encountered. His discussion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai can be usefully contrasted with the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*.

In Plato's telling, the philosopher is someone who escapes the cave-like world of shadows and emerges

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into the blinding sunlight of the "real world." Having contemplated the true essence of things, he returns to the cave in order to rule wisely.

Ben Yochai, by contrast, escapes the "real world," which is in truth a world of shadows and persecution, to a cave where—without sight or sound or shadows of things—he is able to refine his visions of the divine.

MARVIN PRINCE
Oradell, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

As a parent of children in a Jewish day school, I found David Gelernter's article particularly pertinent. Since Jews in my area amount to only 1 percent of the population, sending one's children to this school (which has only 60 students) is truly a decision to separate them from their peers.

It is our custom to begin each meeting of the school's board, on which I sit, with some words of Torah. How wonderful that my issue of COMMENTARY arrived shortly before the meeting. This month's lesson was several paragraphs of Mr. Gelernter's erudite yet sparkling prose. The Holy One Blessed be He may have separated us from all other nations, but where I live, this alone is not enough to ensure our children a Jewish education. We all agreed that "Judaism Beyond Words" expressed why we send them to the school in the first place.

SUSAN ZIMMERMAN
Millersville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter's paean to separation is brilliant, quirky, and at times misleading. Though the act of separating and the state of being separate have much to do with Jewish thought and destiny, separation has never stood as an end in itself. Rather, the Jewish people are to stand apart in order to bring goodness and vision to the nations. "Through you," God says to Abraham as he prepares for his epic journey, "will all the families of the earth be blessed."

Separation is not an instruction to flee the world but rather a prelude to new modes of connecting with it. Yet the theme of connection is strangely absent from Mr. Gelernter's reflections on the reclusive Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai who, according to the Talmud, fails to return to normal social life after spending twelve years in isolation. Ben Yochai is scolded by God: "Have you come out to destroy my world? Return to your cave!" After an additional year of seclusion, Rabbi Shimon exits the cave in a gentler state of mind and even expresses a desire to beautify the world.

Mr. Gelernter's Judaism of separation has its appeal, to be sure. The will to be different has been critical to the Jewish people's survival. An open and upraised Torah scroll can indeed appear a symbol of division, as he points out. But its teaching is one of miraculous connection and conjunction—flesh with spirit, Adam with Eve, God with humanity. Jews have remained a distinct people not out of defiant rejection of the world but in response to the wisdom, love, and joy they have always found in living as children of an eternal covenant.

RABBI JAMES E. PONET
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter's "Judaism Beyond Words" is the stuff of which a breathless new-age Reform rabbi might craft her sermon. A basic test for any quality touted as one of the essences of Judaism must be whether it is uniquely Jewish. But in Mr. Gelernter's hands, the concept of "separation" is so vague and ill-defined that it could apply to nearly anything. Cosmic gases separate into stars, people separate into states, individuals separate into groups, the body's immune system distinguishes self from nonself, and the electrons of one atom generally orbit separately from the electrons in another. Does this mean that stars, Zambia, Liverpool soccer fans, enzymes, and electrons are all somehow Jewish?

Furthermore, Judaism provides ample instances of disapproval of separation. The second of the four sons in the seder narrative is described as "evil" because he separates himself from his community; a *minyan* of at least ten people is required to say kaddish and other Jewish prayers; the righteous Gentile is seen as deserving a place in heaven more than the Jew who merely goes through the motions.

This brings us to the central point about Judaism Mr. Gelernter so clumsily misses: it is not separation that defines Jewishness, but the ability to make moral distinctions. Deuteronomy tells us that we are given the ability to tell the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, and life and death, and that we have the freedom to choose. It is our ability to tell the difference that matters; otherwise, what is the point of separation?

WALTER SCHIMMERLING
Arlington, Virginia

DAVID GELERNTER writes:

To begin at the end: Walter Schimmerling is wrong to say that no property can be the "essence" of a thing unless it belongs to that thing exclusively; I can argue that freedom is the essence of America without implying that all manifestations of freedom are manifestations of America. Still, images are a matter of taste. Any time a writer uses one, he runs the risk that a reader might not like or understand it, and (worse) that this reader might be right. But the risk is worth taking. Unless we invent new images, we cannot think new thoughts.

Mr. Schimmerling also believes that I have clumsily missed the "central point"—that "it is not separation that defines Jewishness, but the ability to make moral distinctions." Actually Judaism believes that all men are able, and are required, to draw moral distinctions. Otherwise, how could it ever hold non-Jews responsible for anything? Nor is every important Jewish distinction a moral distinction. Stealing is immoral; a ham sandwich is *treif*.

Rabbi James E. Ponet argues convincingly that separation is no end in itself; that it leads ultimately to connection or coming together. Isaiah underlines his point: "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (2:2-3).

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Malachi writes (2:10): "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" A rabbinic opinion holds that the most important verse in the Bible is "These are the generations of Adam" (Genesis 5:1), because it shows that all men are one family.

Nonetheless, while Jew and Gentile might come together at the end of time, they will not meet each other half-way. Gentiles will come to the Lord's house, Isaiah says, in order to acknowledge Israel's Torah. Until then, Jews are required to stand apart, set an example and be separate, no matter what it costs. (And it has cost plenty.)

Now to return to the beginning: I have thought hard about Rabbi Norman Lamm's letter, in which he points out that my piece is neither halakhah nor history and refers instead to "a method that speaks to us in our contemporary situation and yields a new understanding." This idea that my piece is something new, not part of an existing genre, is a generous suggestion. But it seems to me that it is in fact not a solo but a voice in a choir—the choir of modern Jewish philosophy, which is so often undervalued and neglected by observant and secular Jews alike. Observant Jews naturally rank halakhic and homiletic literature higher. Secular Jews tend to be interested in philosophy, not Jewish philosophy. But Jews have an urgent obligation, today more than ever, to speak to the world about fundamental questions not merely as generic human beings but as Jews. Jewish philosophy (which is descended from two uniquely Jewish literary forms, prophecy and midrash) is a way to do that.

Francine Klagsbrun is right that any view of Judaism that omits unity and wholeness is no good, and that two ideas can be superficially inconsistent but equally fundamental. I hope that the second installment of my essay, appearing in this month's COMMENTARY, will clarify my understanding of the dialectic within Judaism to which she and several other correspondents refer.

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein notes that the twin spires that sometimes occur in synagogue facades are borrowings, not inventions or deliberate statements. Agreed. The question remains, though: why are some synagogue buildings better than others? A synagogue facade that suggests an upraised Torah feels right even if the architect had other things in mind; even if the suggestion remains subliminal.

I also agree with Rabbi Lookstein that no one is more central to post-talmudic Judaism than Maimonides, that no talmudic sage outranks Akiba, and that Hillel is more important than Shimon ben Yochai. In singling out Shimon ben Yochai, I did not mean to deny any of that, but rather to underline the way in which his experience—of withdrawal (under threat of violence) and of a subsequent explosion of creativity—foreshadows the history of the Jewish people itself.

Rabbi Allen Schwartz makes an important observation: our refusal to draw distinctions has a lot to do with the modern mood. Marvin Prince's remarks on the distinction between Plato's cave and Shimon ben Yochai's are compelling. I am deeply grateful to Susan Zimmerman.

Public Diplomacy

TO THE EDITOR:

Joshua Muravchik recommends a variety of methods for teaching the Islamic world to behave itself ["Hearts, Minds, and the War Against Terror," May]. These include winning the war on terrorism by whatever means necessary and lecturing the Islamic masses through electronic media (as if the cold war were won with Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America). He also seems wistful about the Pentagon's decision to scrap the Office of Strategic Influence, claiming that it was never meant to produce propaganda.

But missing from Mr. Muravchik's essay is any call to pay attention to the terrorists' complaints. A policy of "all talk and no listen"—in politics as in a family—is almost always a recipe for disaster. In 1998, when Jesse Helms chaired the Senate foreign relations committee, I twice issued public pleas asking him to hold hearings to discuss what the Muslims who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 sought to accomplish. What had so deranged their minds that they would do something so uncivilized? I told the Senator that if we failed to address this underlying problem, there would be others who would come back to finish the job at the World Trade Center. There were no hearings.

Listening to petitions from those with a grievance does not mean you must give in to them. But a child who knows that his parents have listened carefully to a request and turned it down with a reasoned response will be less likely to burn down the barn than if the parents simply say, "Shut up and go to your room."

The reason there were no hearings, I surmise, is that the Jewish community was afraid its "parents" in Washington would ask it to share with its Muslim siblings. A clear majority of Jews in Israel and in America support the idea of a Palestinian state living peacefully next to a Jewish state. But Jewish and Palestinian extremists are like two spoiled brats who want it all for themselves.

JUDE WANNISKI
Morristown, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article on the war against terror, Joshua Muravchik writes: "Just as we succeeded in imbuing Japan and Germany with liberalism and democracy after we had defeated them . . . so the defeat of terrorism . . . may open the way to new thinking in the Middle East."

I would extend his argument and suggest that the present reign of Arab terror against Israel can be traced to the ill-advised pressures brought to bear on the Jewish state by the U.S. during the Middle East wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973. Such pressures deprived Israel of the political fruits of its victories. Saved from crushing defeats like those suffered by Germany and Japan in 1945, the Arabs have not been motivated to achieve a bona-fide peace. If Israel successfully extirpates the terrorist networks from the West Bank and Gaza, its

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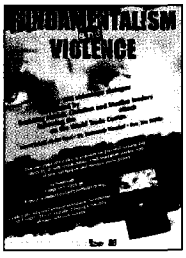

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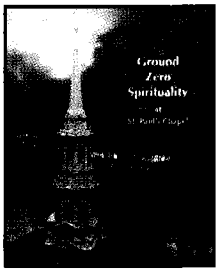

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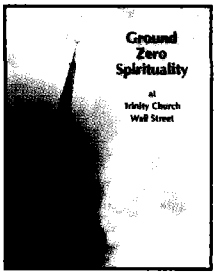

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Arab enemies may well be induced at last to accept the Jewish state as a permanent part of the region.

BENJAMIN D. SHERMAN
Saddle Brook, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Joshua Muravchik is correct to observe that, though we cannot kill the ideas propounded by Islamism, we can hinder the movement by killing the terrorists who further its goals. Islamic fundamentalism arose because of the failure of Arab nationalists to deliver their societies from the ills that plague them. If fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden can be shown to be losers in the same mold as Arab nationalists such as Saddam Hussein and the late Egyptian president Gamal Nasser, the Arab masses may begin to look away from radical Islam and toward more constructive ideologies.

JOHN C. ZIMMERMAN
University of Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

I thank Benjamin D. Sherman and John C. Zimmerman for their letters. I do share Mr. Zimmerman's hope that the defeat of yet another destructive ideology (radical Islam) embraced as a panacea by many Arabs will allow healthier ideas to take root. But whether or not the United States should have stayed Israel's hand in the wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973, I do not agree that this is at the root of our current predicament. As far as I know, the government of Israel never contemplated occupying and remaking its vanquished Arab foes the way the United States did the Axis countries at the conclusion of World War II.

As for Jude Wanniski, ordinarily I would discourage COMMENTARY from publishing letters by writers who have clearly gone off the deep end. In this case, however, it may be useful to allow Mr. Wanniski to expose himself, since it is likely that most readers will recall him only as a once influential advocate of "supply-side" economics and may be unaware of the subjects to which he has addressed himself obsessively in recent times.

His letter is emblematic. He claims that "the Jewish community" prevented Senator Helms from heeding his sage counsel to hold hearings in order to give the terrorists who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 the opportunity to explain what was on their minds. Even if their demands were not all met, this, he seems to reason, would have made the bombers feel better and led somehow to the emergence of a peace-loving Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel. Such a happy outcome would have pleased the "clear majority" of Jews and displeased only Jewish extremists—which does make it hard to understand why "the Jewish community" blocked it.

The logic of this argument is, in short, not linear. But it is of a piece with much else that Mr. Wanniski has to offer these days. He has made himself the principal champion of Saddam Hussein and Louis Farrakhan. The former, he says, is concealing no weapons, did not use poison gas against Iraqi Kurds, and was not behind the assassination attempt on George H. W. Bush in Kuwait in 1993. Nor was Saddam attempting to acquire nuclear weapons until Israel drove him to do it in 1981 by bombing the Iraqi nuclear plant at Osirak, which "was being used for peaceful purposes." True, it was bad of the Iraqi ruler to invade Kuwait in 1990, but, since he acted with the approval of the U.S. government, who are we to judge?

Then there is Farrakhan, who, says Mr. Wanniski, is "emerging as the spiritual leader of the entire Islamic world." In 1999, Farrakhan gave a speech explaining that Jews had falsely branded him anti-Semitic because, "when God sends a prophet into the world to point out where we went wrong, we don't ordinarily say, 'you're right, thank you.'" (In other words, Farrakhan was sent by God to chasten the Jews.) This was hailed by Mr. Wanniski as "by far the best speech I've heard from anyone in this last decade," and was posted on Mr. Wanniski's website although, as he gushed in a letter to Farrakhan, readers "really should get the audiotape to appreciate what you can do in a 90-minute address."

A third self-defined prophet whom Mr. Wanniski has courted is Lyndon LaRouche, the anti-Semitic conspiracist and migrant from extreme Left to extreme Right. Presumably what attracted Mr. Wanniski was not LaRouche's conviction for credit-card fraud but his relentless exposé of the Henry Kissinger-Queen of England-Zionist plot to control the world. The LaRouche-Wanniski partnership faltered, however, or so Mr. Wanniski told the *New Republic*'s Jonathan Chait, because of LaRouche's refusal to embrace supply-side theory. (Apparently Mr. Wanniski believes that Farrakhan has embraced it, and perhaps Saddam, too.)

Mr. Wanniski has a conspiracy theory of his own, claiming that the U.S. government is secretly controlled by Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. The latter in particular evokes the full measure of Mr. Wanniski's mania. "Richard Perle," he writes, "is a madman, totally out of control. Possessed by the forces of Darkness . . . the most evil man on the face of the earth. Hannibal Lecter [in the movie *Silence of the Lambs*] only ate his victims one at a time. Perle likes to eat them en masse." If Perle is not stopped, he warns, "another six million Jews [will] perish in a second Holocaust."

Is he himself an anti-Semite? Mr. Wanniski waxes indignant at the suggestion. "I know anti-Semitism when I see it," he says, "and can assure you neither [Farrakhan] nor I have a speck of anti-Semitism in our hearts or souls." That's a relief.

Wen Ho Lee

TO THE EDITOR:

It is disappointing that Gabriel Schoenfeld's serious, perhaps even libelous, allegation [Letters, July-August] that my "misconduct did immense damage to our government's ability to combat the very real and ongoing Chinese espionage" should be based on nothing more than a restatement of the allegations of the Bellows report.

Mr. Schoenfeld claims that the 1996 Administra-

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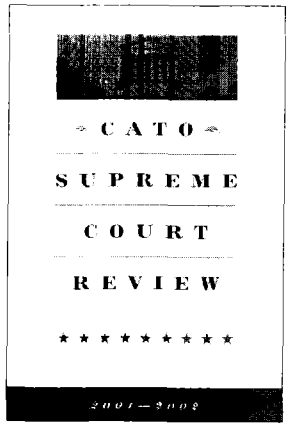

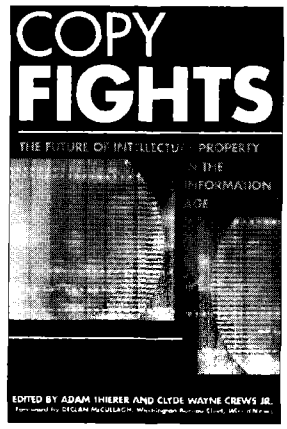

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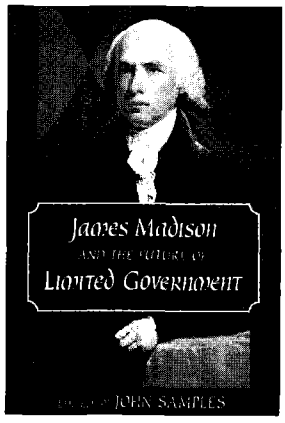

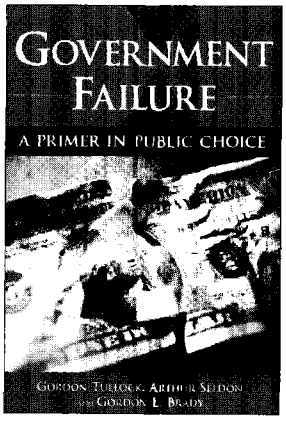

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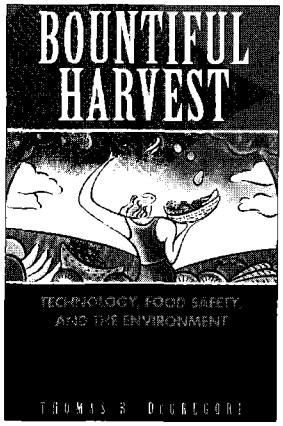

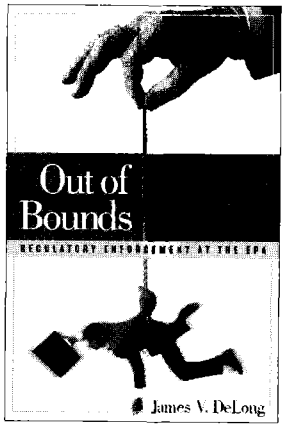

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tive Inquiry (AI), for which I was responsible, suppressed accurate information and dissenting views offered "by a body of government experts," and that I purveyed inaccurate information to the FBI. But he offers no facts beyond those contained in the Bellows report, and he ignores conflicting evidence presented in the 2001 Senate Judiciary Report. He also implies that the issue of Chinese nuclear espionage is by no means settled. Could he please provide a single, on-the-record, official government refutation of the 1999 judgment of the Intelligence Community (the interagency body that coordinates all U.S. intelligence functions) that the Chinese had acquired U.S. nuclear-weapons information by espionage? Or could he show how my view differed from the Intelligence Community's conclusions—especially as I supported and concurred with its judgments?

On the subject of whether I suppressed dissenting information, perhaps Mr. Schoenfeld did not bother to read the footnote in the Senate report noting an FBI summary of a 1996 interview that states: "there was no disagreement that 'Restricted Data' information had been acquired by the Chinese. The only disagreement was over how valuable that information was." Rather than pertaining to the judgment of a "group of government experts," by which I assume Mr. Schoenfeld means the 1995 Kindred Spirit analysis group, this reference to a "disagreement" concerns a lone dissent by Bobby Henson, a scientist at Los Alamos who argued strenuously that the group's conclusions were far too "soft." Henson believed that the Chinese had acquired the W-88 warhead information from a spy, most likely at Los Alamos, and urged the group to adopt that conclusion. I thought that Henson's arguments were not supported by the evidence available to us at the time and accepted the group's conclusions while noting his dissent.

Mr. Schoenfeld then alleges that we misled the FBI with regard to our review of lab facilities, citing Sandia and Pantex as examples of facilities we claimed to have reviewed, but did not. Really? How does he know this—because the Bellows report says so? But is he aware that Dan Bruno, the Department of Energy (DOE) investigator, has testified under oath that he and the FBI agent assisting us did visit Sandia in January 1996, only to learn that the Energy Department had permitted Sandia to destroy all records of foreign travel or foreign visitors—and so there were no records for Bruno to examine? Did he know that Bruno had tasked Pantex (and Rocky Flats, too) to assemble similar sets of records for review? But counterintelligence officials at both sites reminded us that these facilities were considered too sensitive to permit foreign visitors or to allow workers to travel to China or Russia, and such records therefore did not even exist.

We understood that this did not automatically eliminate these sites from suspicion, and said so. But only the FBI had the authority to employ the counterintelligence tools—like covert examination of mail or trash, electronic surveillance, etc.—necessary to complete the review of these locations. The FBI explicitly directed that we not undertake extensive interviews of lab scientists or workers; it feared that such activity could tip off any potential suspects.

Finally, it is perfectly conceivable that the Bellows report could be a generally accurate assessment of the government's handling of the case, but still be badly mistaken about the particulars of the DOE Administrative Inquiry. The Bellows team, composed of Department of Justice officials and FBI agents, did not begin its work until 1999—more than three years after the AI was delivered to the Bureau. The investigators assisting Bellows did not interview lab scientists until well into 1999. By that time, both the FBI, especially in Albuquerque, and Los Alamos were well along in their revision of the history of this case in order to blunt the criticisms both expected (and received) from the Cox Commission.

Again, Mr. Schoenfeld must have overlooked the 2001 Senate Judiciary Report's conclusion that "The FBI's failures in the Wen Ho Lee investigation should not be blamed on the AI." Be assured that the Senators and their aides who wrote that report had full access to the entire record of what really happened in 1995 and 1996. Mr. Schoenfeld, on the other hand, does not seem to have such access. Neither does he seem to have read carefully the reports of those who do. Until he does, perhaps he should be more cautious about his accusations in print about my "misconduct."

NOTRA TRULOCK
Falls Church, Virginia

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD writes:

Notra Trulock is almost entirely correct that my characterization of his role is "nothing more than a restatement of the allegations of the Bellows report." But it follows logically from this that if what I wrote was libelous, so too is the Bellows report.

Of course, I do not believe that the Bellows report or my own summary of it is libelous at all. The first authority I would cite is none other than Notra Trulock himself, who has praised the Bellows report unreservedly in other forums. Indeed, the material he now suggests might be libelous he even had his lawyer greet, upon its publication, with a press release headlined, "Bellows Report Exonerates Notra Trulock." In our previous round of correspondence, I noted the astonishing pirouettes he has performed with respect to the Bellows report, but he does not explain or even mention his bizarre reversals here.

When I say that Mr. Trulock is "almost entirely" correct in his comments about my sources, I have something specific in mind. In writing about his role, I also relied on materials other than the Bellows report, including a document that Mr. Trulock twice refers to here as the "2001 Senate Judiciary Report." He draws upon this "2001 Senate Judiciary Report," which he accuses me of having overlooked, to make several assertions about the 1996 Administrative Inquiry.

But there is a minor mystery here. The Senate Judiciary Committee did not release any reports about the Wen Ho Lee case in the year 2001. One can search high

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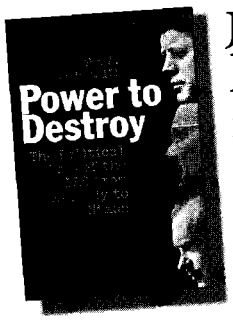

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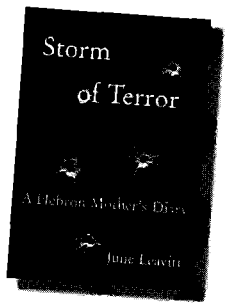

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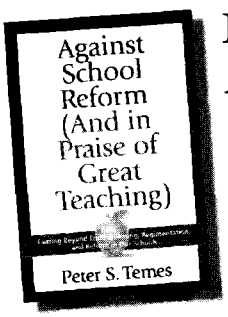

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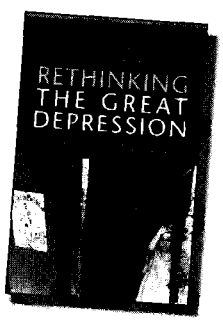

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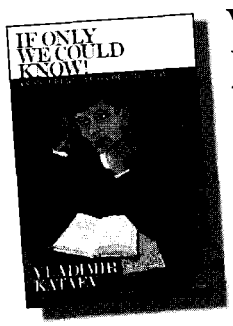

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and low in the stacks of the Senate library and still not find the "2001 Senate Judiciary Report" or anything titled like it issued by the Judiciary or any other Senate committee.

The document Mr. Trulock is referring to, a copy of which I have in hand, is missing the customary apparatus of a congressional committee report and is not available to the public in the usual bound form. The text itself, which does indeed concern the Department of Energy investigation, contains no account of how it was prepared, what facilities were visited, or who were the principal investigators, among other basic features. It includes an introduction—written in the first-person singular—but it also, quite peculiarly, lacks an identifiable author.

Nonetheless, the mystery is easily solved. The report was issued by a single United States Senator, Arlen Specter, "published" on a copying machine and on the Senator's website, and inserted into the *Congressional Record*. It has no standing beyond what attaches to an ordinary utterance of any congressional officeholder.

What is even more relevant, the report is remarkably sloppy and contains significant distortions. At one point, it even asserts that Notra Trulock was only "closely associated" with the AI and "*not* its author" (emphasis added). Only in a purely literal sense can this be construed as true: namely, that subordinates to Mr. Trulock drafted and typed the AI. But to leave it at that, as the report does, is to airbrush Mr. Trulock to the edge of the picture and seriously mislead about the chain of authority. It directly contradicts Mr. Trulock himself, who in both of his letters to COMMENTARY makes clear his full responsibility for authorship of the AI.

In any event, Senator Specter himself does not claim that his report is a definitive accounting. Speaking on the Senate floor on December 20, 2001, he was at pains to explain the obstacles he was unable to overcome in its preparation. His Senate colleagues, he complained, never granted him the crucial power to issue subpoenas and compel testimony. His inquiry was "thwarted repeatedly" by the FBI, which at a certain juncture simply "refused to provide additional information." The Department of Energy would not cooperate, and indeed was "intransigent." As for the Senate resources devoted to the inquiry, a solitary staff member was assigned responsibility for "virtually *singlehandedly* conducting the oversight investigations and writing the reports" (emphasis added).

When Mr. Trulock falsely suggests that Senator Specter's document bears the imprimatur of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and then falsely asserts, in a sentence purveying multiple misrepresentations, that "the Senators and their aides who wrote that report had full access to the entire record of what really happened in 1995 and 1996," he is offering a glimpse into the kind of verbal manipulations that transformed the Wen Ho Lee case from a valid counterintelligence investigation into a fiasco that gravely undermined our government's ability to combat the ongoing problem of Chinese espionage.

Yet another revealing example of Mr. Trulock's methods can be found in his request that I "please provide a single, on-the-record, official government refutation of the Intelligence Community's 1999 judgment that the Chinese had acquired U.S. nuclear weapons information by espionage." This challenge is more dust thrown in our eyes. In our previous round of correspondence, Mr. Trulock claimed that a 1999 interagency intelligence study confirmed the premise of his 1996 AI. I stated in response that the issue was "by no means settled." He is now suggesting that by questioning him on this point, I am calling into doubt the 1999 interagency finding.

But I made it plain that I do not quarrel with the interagency finding in the least. The Chinese almost certainly did obtain U.S. nuclear secrets via espionage, and I stated as much in my article. The only thing not "settled" was Mr. Trulock's contention that the 1999 study confirms the contents of his AI. The AI, to judge by those portions of it in the public record, went far beyond a finding that the Chinese had fruitfully engaged in espionage. It pointed a finger exclusively at Los Alamos National Laboratory and at Wen Ho Lee before ruling out all other locations and suspects.

I cannot fathom why Mr. Trulock puts forward such easily exposed distortions, but his claim that the 1999 Intelligence Community study retrospectively vindicates his AI and his effort to inflate Senator Specter's personal report into something more comprehensive and authoritative than it is immediately bring to mind the scathing criticisms directed at him by the Bellows report. Mr. Trulock's AI, we are told there, was "a slapdash affair" that contained "numerous inconsistent and contradictory statements as well as unsubstantiated assertions." It also employed "horribly inexact language" and was "so poorly written and organized that this alone made it difficult to evaluate and comprehend."

What a pity that the AI document remains classified so we cannot judge for ourselves, but from the way Mr. Trulock has conducted himself in this correspondence, I am prepared to believe the worst.

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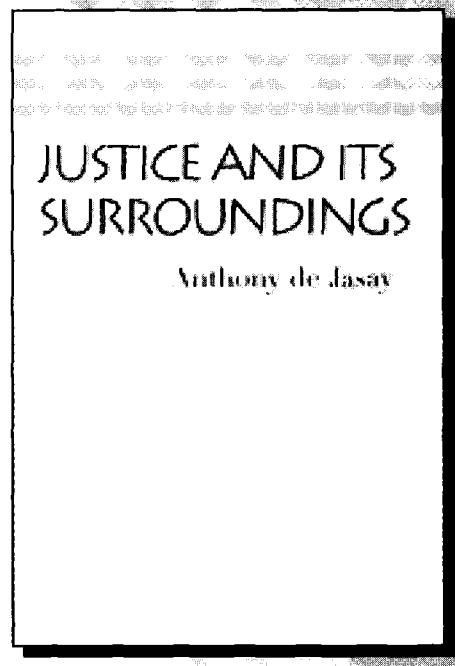

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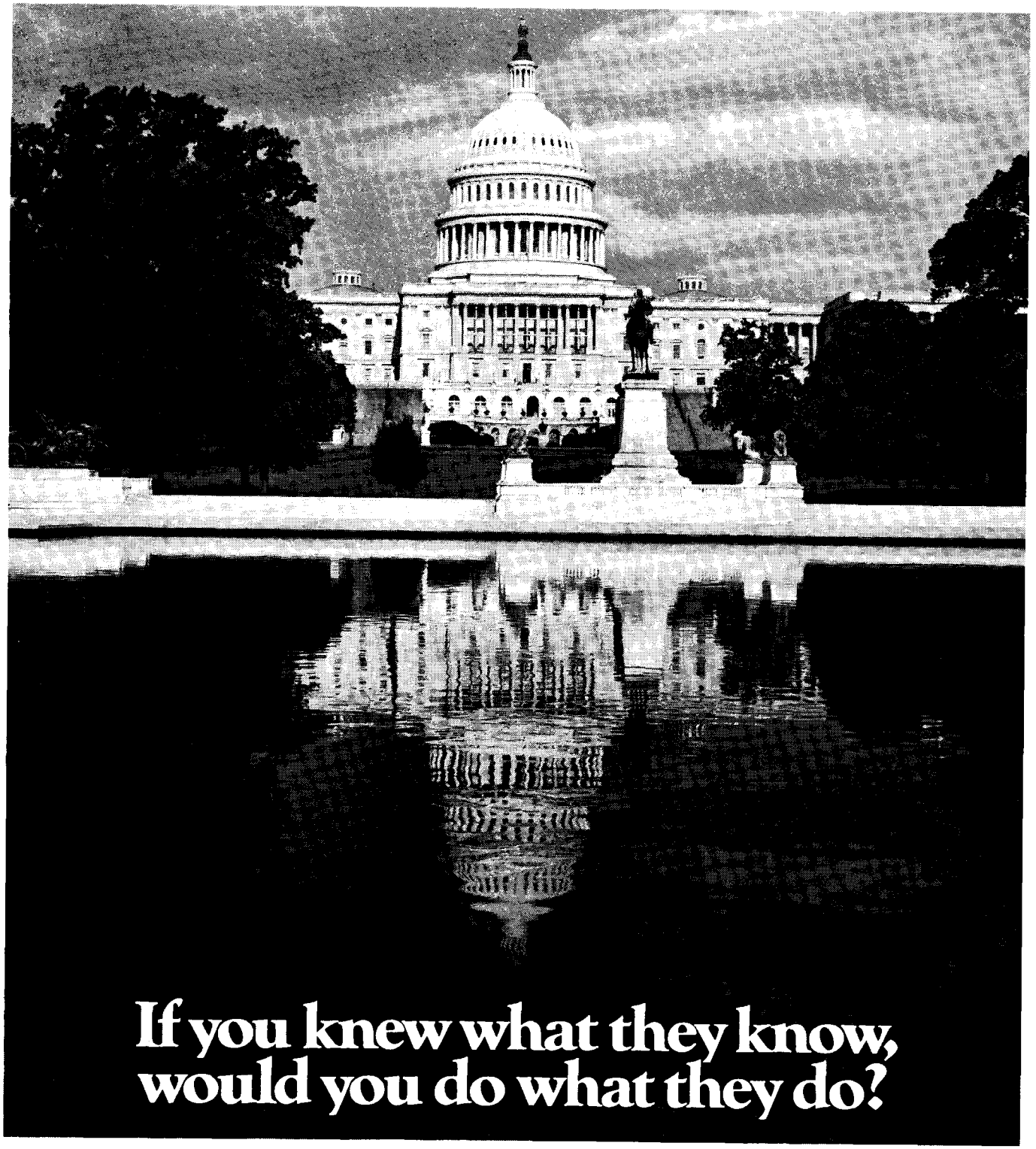

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Commentary
September 2002

In Praise of the Bush Doctrine

Norman Podhoretz

It has been said—by me, among others—that George W. Bush bears a closer political resemblance to Ronald Reagan than to his father.

The first, and most obvious, similarity is that "Dubya," like Reagan before him, was and still is very widely regarded as insufficiently intelligent or well-informed to be President. By now, the idea of Reagan as "the Great Communicator" is so entrenched that it has become hard to remember how frequently he was once ridiculed for being both inarticulate and an "airhead." In his campaign against Jimmy Carter, for example, Reagan was always being charged with committing "gaffes" that allegedly showed the problems he had with the English language whenever there was no script for this former Hollywood actor to rely on. At the same time, such gaffes were said to reveal his haziness about the great issues, domestic and foreign, that as President he would have to confront. To the extent that he was even aware of these issues—government spending, taxes, the Soviet threat—his approach to them was invariably mocked as "simple-minded."[1]

So too with George W. Bush. Beginning with the campaign that eventually landed him in the White House, he was, if anything, more relentlessly ridiculed than Reagan for his difficulties with the English language no less than for his ignorance of the particularities and nuances of world affairs. That ample justification existed for dubbing Bush "Governor Malaprop," as did one mercilessly documented assault written during the Republican primaries, Bush himself cheerfully admitted:

> Well, a lot of folks don't think I can string a sentence together so when I was able to do so, the expectations were so low that all I had to do was say, "Hi, I'm George W. Bush."

As for his ignorance of the international scene, there was—to cite only one item on a long list—Bush's inability to identify the new president of Pakistan. Of course, after September 11, he came to know the name of Pervez Musharraf only too well; and not knowing it before seemed to pose no obstacle to Bush in getting Musharraf to reverse alliances and help us topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

But if Bush was even more roughly treated than Reagan for his poor command of the language and his dimness about international affairs, where the

Norman Podhoretz *is editor-at-large of* Commentary *and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. His new book,* The Prophets: Who They Were, What They Are, *will be published by the Free Press in November.*

[1] Interestingly, in this respect among others Reagan was in the company of his old hero, Franklin D. Roosevelt, of whom the great pundit of the day, Walter Lippmann, had written in his column in 1932, when FDR was first making a bid for the White House: "He is a pleasant man who, without any important qualifications for the office, would very much like to be President." The friends of the young Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor, shared this view: their nickname for him was the "feather-duster."

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charge of "simple-mindedness" was concerned, the contest was too close to call.

True, Reagan's denunciation of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" evoked an outcry that was nothing short of hysterical from all the chancelleries and nearly all the private foreign-policy establishments in the world. Evil? What place did a word like that have in the lexicon of international affairs, assuming any enlightened person would ever dream of exhuming it from the grave of obsolete concepts in any connection whatsoever? But in the eyes of the experts, needless to say, Reagan was not an enlightened person at all. He was a "cowboy," a B-movie actor, who had by some freak of democratic perversity landed in the White House. In denouncing the Soviet empire as evil, he was charged either with signaling an intention to trigger a nuclear war or with being too stupid to understand that his wildly provocative rhetoric might do so inadvertently.

Bush hardly fared better. When, in his first State of the Union speech, he expanded on his definition of the war against terrorism and denounced Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil," the reaction from the same types who had been so alarmed by Reagan was admittedly more scornful than hysterical; this time, there was no carrying-on about a nuclear war. But the air was just as widely pervaded with the old sneers and jeers at the "simple-mindedness" reflected by the very concept that some nations were evil and others good.

To make matters worse, there was the global situation that had developed since the end of the cold war. In a nutshell, America now commanded a degree of power greater than anything recorded in all of human history. No one doubted this; nor did anyone imagine that any other country or group of countries currently existed with the capacity, or the will, to challenge American power. In the past, when a single nation had achieved predominance, alliances would invariably be formed to balance it, but no such possibility could be discerned on the horizon at present or was likely to swim into view in the foreseeable future.

As the diplomats and the pundits saw it, this was not a happy circumstance but a dangerous one. Given its dangers, who but an ignoramus and a simpleton—or a religious fanatic of the very type with whom Bush was going to war—would resort to archaic moral absolutes like "good" and "evil"? And then, who but a fool could bring himself to believe, as Bush (like Reagan before him) evidently had done in complete and ingenuous sincerity, that the United States represented the "good"? Surely only a virtual illiterate could be oblivious of all the innumerable crimes committed by America both at home and abroad—crimes that the country's own leading intellectuals had so richly documented in the by-now standard academic view of its history.[2]

BUT GEORGE W. Bush was following in Ronald Reagan's footsteps in more than just the vivid moral coloration of his rhetoric. In both cases, the colors were heightened by contrast with the drabness of the spiritual and/or ethical background against which they were being painted.

Thus, Reagan's unabashedly reverential attitude toward America stood in extreme contrast to the ambivalence felt, and manifested on more than one occasion, by his immediate predecessor, Jimmy Carter. Two of those occasions were Carter's speech about the "inordinate fear of Communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who shared in that fear," and the pathetic projection onto the American people of the "malaise" from which he himself was suffering. Most of all, there was Carter's conviction that this country had entered into a period of decline, together with his exhortation that we cultivate the "maturity" to accept this development, which was in his view both historically inevitable and not altogether bad.

So, too, with Bush and *his* predecessor, Bill Clinton. The youthful Clinton's distrust of American power—candidly set forth in the notorious letter he wrote to the draft board in seeking exemption from military service during the Vietnam war—persisted during his presidency. At that stage, it became the engine driving his many efforts to tie down this reckless Gulliver of an America with the ropes of "multilateralism." Bush, on the other hand, had not the slightest doubt that American

[2] The egregious Gore Vidal, always eager not to be outdone in the hate-America Olympics, made his bid in an interview about his latest book of essays: "I mean, to watch Bush doing his little war dance in Congress . . . about 'evildoers' and this 'axis of evil'. . . . I thought, he doesn't even know what the word *axis* means. Somebody just gave it to him. . . . This is about as mindless a statement as you could make. Then he comes up with about a dozen other countries that have 'evil' people in them, who might commit 'terrorist acts.' What is a terrorist act? Whatever he thinks is a terrorist act. And we are going to go after them. Because we are good and they are evil. And we're 'gonna git 'em.'" Yet having disposed of Bush as "mindless," Vidal surprisingly contradicted himself and denied that the President was "an idiot himself." Rather, Bush was "convinced we are idiots. And we are not idiots. We are cowed. Cowed by . . . a skewed view of the world, and atrocious taxes that subsidize this permanent war machine. And we have no representation. Only the corporations are represented in Congress." Evidently Vidal realized belatedly that to emphasize Bush's stupidity would be to undercut his real point: that the President was actually "clever" enough to conceal his undying fealty to the oil interests and his "contempt for the American people."

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power was a force for good, and—as his European critics never tired of charging—he was more a "unilateralist" than a multilateralist.

To put the point more concretely, the rhetorical echoes of Reagan reflected a shared worldview that Bush was bringing up to date now that the cold war was over. What Communism had been to Reagan in that war, terrorism was to Bush in this one; and as Reagan had been persuaded that the United States of America had a mission to hasten the demise of the one, Bush believed that we had a mission to rid the world of the other.

Yet all this only revealed itself to Bush on September 11, 2001. Before the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, Bush—or so it seemed to me—had no clear conception of what he wanted to accomplish as President. "Compassionate conservatism," the tag he had adopted for his approach to domestic affairs, sounded much like his father's "kindler, gentler America." And like the elder Bush's slogan, the son's tacitly and unfortunately lent credence to the defamatory liberal charge that conservatives were a heartless breed whose greatest pleasure in life was grinding their heels in the faces of the poor while piling greater and greater heaps of gold into the coffers of the greedy rich.[3]

In foreign affairs, the pre-9/11 Bush seemed placidly content to be nothing more than the un-Clinton. True to his unshakable distrust of American power, Clinton had slashed our defenses, and he had endorsed a conception of "nation building" under which our military forces should primarily be employed to do international social work. The multilateralism about which he was so enthusiastic was in essence a euphemism for deference to that organization of despots, petty and grand, known as the United Nations. Furthermore, like the UN itself, Clinton had devoted a wildly disproportionate amount of energy to the Middle East; and he had invited the Palestinian dictator Yasir Arafat to the White House more often than any other world leader.

Reversing or nullifying all or most of these policies, as Bush apparently wished to do, would have been enough for many of us to experience, if not wild enthusiasm, then at least relief at his victory over Al Gore, who presumably would have carried on with them. But, again like his father, Bush was deficient in the "vision thing." In foreign affairs, this meant that if he had a guiding sense of what the American role should be in the post-cold-war world, he never communicated it to the rest of us.

One can reasonably assume, however, that for the first eight months of his presidency, Bush had no such sense, and that he had simply gone along with his father's standard "realist" perspective. In that perspective, the maintenance of stability is a far more important, and more attainable, objective than the "idealistic" or "Wilsonian"—or, for that matter, "Reaganite"—ambition to change the world, especially with the aim of making it "safe for democracy."

And then came September 11. In its immediate aftermath, a transformed—or, more precisely, a transfigured—George W. Bush appeared before us. In an earlier article in these pages,[4] I suggested, perhaps presumptuously, that out of the blackness of smoke and fiery death let loose by September 11, a kind of revelation, blazing with a very different fire of its own, lit up the recesses of Bush's mind and heart and soul. Which is to say that, having previously been unsure as to why he should have been chosen to become President of the United States, George W. Bush now *knew* that the God to whom, as a born-again Christian, he had earlier committed himself had put him in the Oval Office for a purpose. He had put him there to lead a war against the evil of terrorism.

Bush officially declared this war in an address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, in which he first enunciated the general terms and spirit of a new "Bush Doctrine." He then expanded on the new doctrine in three subsequent pronouncements—the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002; his speech to the graduating class of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on June 1; and the remarks on the Middle East he delivered three weeks later, on June 24. All four of these speeches were enormously impressive, though none of the three later ones quite made it to the heights of sublimity scaled by the first.

I have no idea how much of Bush's own language entered into this text. Conceivably the whole thing was produced by his staff of speechwriters, and Bush's only contribution was to sign off on it. But if so, it hardly matters: we are long past the era

[3] Here it was Bush more than Reagan who fit Walter Lippmann's patronizing portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt, of whom Lippmann wrote in the same column I quoted above: "Franklin D. Roosevelt is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege."

[4] "How to Win World War IV," February 2002. In that article, borrowing the illuminating terminology first adopted by the military analyst Eliot Cohen, I designated the cold war as World War III, and the war against terrorism as World War IV. I will stick with that terminology here.

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when Presidents wrote their own speeches. What counts nowadays is the words a President permits to be put into his mouth. In speaking those words, he assumes responsibility for them, and thereby makes them his own as surely—well, almost as surely—as if he were their original author. This is what Bush did on September 20, in what—ironically, for the former "Governor Malaprop"—may well have been the greatest presidential speech of our age.

It was here that Bush's conversion from a conventional "realist" in the mold of his father to a democratic "idealist" of the Reaganite stamp was announced to the world. Of the "global terrorist network," he declared in a passage that deserves to live forever:

> We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.

It was also in this speech that Bush broadened the object of the personal revelation I think he had been vouchsafed, so that it now spread its wings over the American people as a whole. If he had lacked "the vision thing" before, he had it now in spades. "Great harm has been done to us," he mournfully intoned toward the end. "We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment." Then he went on to spell out the substance of that mission and that moment:

> The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.[5]

But in his peroration, reaching back to some of the same language he had been applying to the nation as a whole, Bush reverted to the first person, and in a style that came close to sounding like a prayer:

> I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it. I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people. The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

All this was undergirded by an equally startling shift in strategic analysis. Every President before Bush—including his own pre-September-11 self—had treated terrorists as criminal individuals or as members of Mafia-like organizations to be dealt with by the police and the courts. But the post-September 11 Bush had come to understand that there would be no serious terrorism without state sponsorship.

From this recognition flowed a corollary: that it would be necessary to "starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place until there is no refuge or no rest." More than that, we would henceforth rely on the military as much as or more than on the police

> to pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

But novel and bold as this new strategic formula was, at bottom what gave the speech its greatness, and its power, was the incandescent moral clarity informing it. Indeed, so many people were struck by this quality that the term "moral clarity" soon became a cliché, if an inescapable one, much to the dismay and disgust of hordes of "advanced" thinkers and "sophisticated" commentators and diplomats both at home and abroad.

IN THE four months that elapsed between the speech of September 20, 2001 and the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, Bush made good on his threat that "The hour is coming when America will act." After some missteps in the first few weeks, this country put on a display of military

[5] In this instance, and in the passage I quote just below, the echo was less of Ronald Reagan than of Winston Churchill, who declared as World War II was getting under way in 1940: "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end." And it is worth noting that Churchill, who had been the target of many derogatory epithets in his long career but who was never regarded even by his worst enemies as "simple-minded," had no hesitation in attaching a phrase like "monster of wickedness" to Hitler. Nor did the political philosopher Hannah Arendt, whose mind was, if anything, overcomplicated rather than too simple, have any problem in her masterpiece, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, with calling both Nazism and Communism "absolute evil."

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might in Afghanistan that astounded even those around the world who had been acknowledging through their incessant grumbling that America had become the sole remaining "superpower": as it turned out, even they had not known the half of it (and neither had many Americans).

The envy and the fear reinforced by this realization generated even more scorn than before over the talk of "good" and "evil" emanating from Bush. And such derision was rarely unaccompanied by complaints from our European allies, the UN, and others (including what is left of our own foreign-policy establishment) about American "unilateralism."

Perhaps worst of all from the point of view of his critics (whose ranks increasingly embraced not only marginal figures like Gore Vidal and his ilk in the literary and academic communities but many mainstream politicians and pundits) was the naming by Bush of that "axis of evil" in his January State of the Union address. Regimes like those in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, he declared, were "arming to threaten the peace of the world." And he continued:

> By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

Bush had already pretty clearly indicated on September 20 that he had no intention of waiting around to be attacked again ("we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism"). But in his State of the Union speech in January, he became much more explicit about his intention to go beyond the fundamentally retaliatory operation we had launched in Afghanistan by strongly suggesting that we would also take preemptive action whenever it might be deemed necessary:

> We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.

To those with ears to hear, the State of the Union address should have removed all traces of ambiguity from the Bush Doctrine as originally enunciated on September 20. Yet there were many—once more, both at home and abroad—who contended that the United States needed smoking-gun evidence of Iraqi involvement in 9/11 in order to attack Saddam Hussein, and to do unto his regime what we had just done to the Taliban in Afghanistan. As it happened, such evidence existed, even if it might not have been enough to secure a conviction in an American court of law or in the hypocritical tribunals of the "international community," not to mention the "Arab street."

Nevertheless, that particular issue was rendered moot by the codicil now tacked on to the Bush Doctrine. According to this codicil, Saddam's development of weapons of mass destruction sufficed all on its own to make him a legitimate target in a preemptive war of self-defense.

The first pillar of the Bush Doctrine, then, was built on a rejection of moral relativism. The second stood tall on a reconception of terrorism as a problem involving states and therefore calling for a military response (along with other instruments of power, whether economic or diplomatic). And the third was the assertion of our right to preempt.

Strangely, that this right to preempt was a logical extension of the general outline Bush provided on September 20, and that it was articulated in the plainest of words in the codicil of January 29, went largely unnoticed. Until, that is, he reaffirmed it in the third of the series of major speeches defining the Bush Doctrine—the one delivered on June 1 at West Point to the 2002 graduating class of newly commissioned officers of the United States Army.

Perhaps the reason the preemption pillar finally became unmistakably visible at West Point was that, for the first time, Bush placed his new ideas in historical context:

> For much of the last century, America's defense relied on the cold-war doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizen to defend.

This covered al Qaeda and similar groups. But Bush then proceeded to explain why the old doctrines could not work with a regime like Saddam Hussein's in Iraq:

> Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons or missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.

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Refusing to flinch from the implications of this analysis, Bush repudiated the previously sacred dogmas of arms control and treaties against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a means of dealing with the dangers now facing us from Iraq and other members of the axis of evil:

> We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systematically break them.

Hence, Bush inexorably continued,

> If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. . . . [T]he war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.

But Bush did not confine himself in the West Point speech to questions of military strategy. He also reaffirmed—and even more defiantly in the face of the critics he had brought out of the woodwork—the universality of the moral purposes animating this war:

> Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. . . . We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.

Then, in a fascinating leap into the great theoretical debate of the post-cold-war era (though without identifying the main participants), Bush came down squarely on the side of Francis Fukuyama against Samuel Huntington:

> The 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance.

Having endorsed Fukuyama's much-misunderstood view of "the end of history," Bush now brushed off Huntington's rival theory of a "clash of civilizations":

> When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world. The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes. . . . Mothers and fathers and children across the Islamic world, and all the world, share the same fears and aspirations. In poverty, they struggle. In tyranny, they suffer. And as we saw in Afghanistan, in liberation they celebrate.

ALL THIS was fully consistent with the two previous speeches Bush had made on September 20 and January 29. But—a very big but—it was not consistent with the realities on the ground in the Middle East. In the Islamic world, and particularly the Arab countries (including such of our "friends" as Saudi Arabia and Egypt), mothers and fathers were *celebrating* Palestinian children (including their own) who blew themselves up as a way of killing as many Israeli Jews as possible.

Bush, again unlike his father, seemed to harbor no animus against Israel; and again like Reagan, he seemed to have a sense of kinship with the Jewish state. Nor did Bush evince the slightest indication of agreeing with the idea that we had been attacked by Osama bin Laden because we were too friendly to Israel. To those who held on to this idea for dear life, it made no difference that bin Laden himself had given it the lie by treating the issue of the Palestinians as relatively unimportant (which did not prevent those same Palestinians from dancing in the streets on September 11, along with millions of other Arabs in other countries who regarded him as a great hero).

But it did make a difference to Bush, who believed, as he said on September 20, that the terrorists hated us for "our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other." On this premise, they must hate Israel for the same reasons. And in fact, Bush added, their wish "to drive Israel out of the Middle East" was only one element of their larger ambition "to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa."

Yet this short but accurate summary was compromised by the strangely discordant note that preceded it: "They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan." The problem here was not that Bush was wrong: al Qaeda and related Islamic terrorists most assuredly did want to over-

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throw those governments. But the great sin of the Saudi regime in bin Laden's eyes had nothing to do with Israel: the sin was to have allowed infidel American troops onto soil sacred to Islam. Similarly, the rulers of Egypt and Jordan were guilty because they had aligned themselves politically with the United States, the "Great Satan."

By professing friendship for the United States, these three regimes had earned the sobriquet "moderate" in the West, no matter what else they did or failed to do that ill-consorted with such a characterization. None of the three governments mentioned by Bush, least of all Saudi Arabia, though with the partial exception of Jordan (which, however, had allied itself with Saddam Hussein in the Gulf war), permitted its people any of the freedoms to whose prevalence in America the President had just attributed the hatred of us that had so horrifically exploded on September 11.

Moreover, the controlled and official state media in Saudi Arabia and Egypt were full of vitriolic attacks on the United States. To top it all off, the Saudis provided much of the financing for the *madrassas*, the religious schools in Saudi Arabia itself and throughout the entire realm of Islam in which students were indoctrinated with the very form of Islamic radicalism that bred in their young souls a seething lust for holy war and the "martyrdom" of suicide bombing. Small wonder, then, that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Saudi citizens, and that two of the others were Egyptians.

In spite of all this, the Bush administration was apparently determined to spare no effort in enlisting these regimes in its "coalition." Even more extraordinary was the courting of Syria and Yemen, both of which were on the State Department's own list of states that harbored and sponsored terrorism. How was it possible to reconcile such a policy with the President's declaration on September 20 that "any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime"?

The same question might have been raised in the case of Pakistan, which had supported both the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and al Qaeda. But here it had been easy to reconcile the contradiction. For when, shortly after Bush's speech of September 20, the U.S. attacked Afghanistan, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan was persuaded to be "with us" militarily. No similar military rationale could be unearthed for the administration's kowtowing—no weaker word would do—to the Arab despots throughout the Middle East.

True, one heard much buzzing about all the help the Saudis and the Egyptians were giving us. But the talk was empty. The Saudis vetoed any plan we might have to launch air strikes against Iraq from their territory, and would not even willingly cooperate in cutting off funds to terrorist groups. As for the Egyptians, the "intelligence" we were supposedly getting from them had no discernible value in the Afghanistan campaign, and they too opposed attacking Saddam Hussein. Nor did their controlled press let up on the anti-American (and anti-Semitic) filth that was a central component of the daily diet fed to its readers. While President Hosni Mubarak made soothing sounds in interviews with American and other Western papers, or when speaking privately to Washington, the editor-in-chief of his own government daily *al-Akhbar* was inventing an "axis of evil" of his own that consisted of "Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld."

I was assured by people better informed than I that, while Saudi cooperation would be convenient for a military attack on Iraq, it would not be indispensable. If so, one was driven back to the hoary explanation of oil. Was it then the Texas oil interests, so disproportionately represented in the elder Bush's administration and still working behind the scenes in the younger's, that accounted for the contradictions between the President's words and his policy in this area? For reasons that will become clear in a moment, I could not bring myself to swallow this interpretation.

By far the starkest, and most puzzling, of the contradictions between Bush's words and his policy was the intransigent refusal of the administration to acknowledge that there was not a smidgen of difference between what the United States was doing in Afghanistan and Israel's acts of retaliation against the wave of suicide, or rather homicide, bombings that had been afflicting the country for nearly two years.

The low point was the President's announcement that "Enough is enough" in demanding that Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon immediately withdraw his forces from the West Bank, to which they had been sent in late March. Yet Sharon had sent them there for exactly the same reason ours had been dispatched to Afghanistan: in order to root out the terrorist infrastructure being harbored, trained, and financed in that area with the express purpose of killing as many citizens of his country as possible.

Admittedly, Bush never put teeth into his demand on Israel. Although he did not exactly give

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Sharon a "green light," as the Arab world and its sympathizers charged, he did give him a flashing amber light in the form of a few more weeks: not enough to finish the job, but enough to make a dent in the terrorist infrastructure that had been built up under the Palestinian Authority (PA) over which Yasir Arafat presided. In due course, Bush also seems to have realized that there was something worse than incoherent—something almost crazy—in supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state run by Arafat and his henchmen. Why should America acquiesce, let alone help, in adding yet another state to those that harbored and sponsored terrorism precisely at a time when we were at war to rid the world of just such regimes?

It was, I would imagine, out of the inability to answer this question that a new idea entered and straightened out Bush's thinking: the PA had to be reformed in order to qualify for statehood. Yet even on the dubious assumption that reform of the PA was a viable project, the Palestinian issue was not isolated or autonomous. It had always been the instrument of the Arab/Muslim world as a whole: an instrument to be wielded against Israel and to distract the attention of the Muslim peoples from their grievances against their own rulers. This being so, there could be no peace between the Palestinians and Israel unless the region as a whole were to reconcile itself to the existence of a sovereign Jewish state in its midst and give up the dream of wiping it out once and for all.

Enter the de-facto Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Abdullah, who was among the first to perceive that, sooner or later, the logic of his war against terrorism would force Bush to confront and then act on this truth about the war against Israel. Grasping the point, and worried, too, about the unprecedentedly bad press his country was suddenly getting here, Prince Abdullah enlisted the eagerly docile services of Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* to unveil a "peace plan" that would, he claimed, involve the acceptance of Israel by the entire Arab world.

But even if the Abdullah plan were more than a public-relations ploy (and a tactic calculated to turn Washington's attention away from Iraq), the contradiction was still left hanging between, on the one hand, Bush's unqualified endorsement of the craving of Muslims for "the same freedoms and opportunities" we enjoyed and, on the other, his courting and coddling of regimes that denied them such freedoms and opportunities.

It would seem that Bush had been snookered by the Saudis (no doubt with the complicity of his Secretary of State, Colin Powell) into the delusion that "the road to Baghdad runs through Jerusalem"—that, in other words, the Palestinians had to be accommodated before Iraq could be attacked. And so, for several weeks, Bush lost his way. He dawdled through a series of meetings with the Saudi and Israeli leaders, issuing various statements after each encounter that deepened the bog of confusion into which he had sunk.

Gone was the moral clarity that had previously been granted to him, and with it went the sharpness of his strategic focus on Iraq. Bush had months earlier warned us that time was "not on our side": that Saddam already had a store of chemical and biological weapons and that (as confirmed by high-level defectors from Iraq) he was very close to developing nuclear ones as well. Yet here Bush was squandering large amounts of that precious time on a peripheral issue, and undermining what he had been trying to accomplish ever since the post-9/11 revelation of his mission as President of the United States.

Perhaps it was all this that accounted for the amazing paucity of media attention to his West Point speech. Yet that speech represented an attempt to regain the moral clarity Bush had temporarily lost (he even brought in the phrase itself), while integrating moral considerations more organically than before into the strategic imperative half-created and half-illuminated by this clarity.

EVEN THOUGH it hardly caused a stir, the speech (as we have already seen) succeeded beautifully in reaffirming and refining the ideas Bush had been advancing since September 20, 2001. What was even more important, it succeeded in concentrating the President's own mind. In the three weeks that elapsed between his West Point address and his remarks on the Middle East of June 24, Bush at last managed to achieve the same moral clarity about that region that had come to him about terrorism in general after 9/11.

Thus, having earlier become the first American President to endorse publicly the establishment of a Palestinian state, Bush on June 24 explained why he would not and could not stick by this endorsement unconditionally:

> Today, Palestinian authorities are encouraging, not opposing terrorism. This is unacceptable. And the United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure.

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But accomplishing this required the election of "new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror" who would embark on building "entirely new political and economic institutions based on democracy, market economics, and action against terrorism."

It was with these words that Bush brought his "vision" (as he kept calling it) of a Palestinian state that could live in peace alongside Israel into line with his overall perspective on the evil of terrorism. And having traveled that far, he went the distance by redepositing the Palestinians into the larger context from which Arab propaganda had ripped them. Since this move was something else that passed almost unnoticed (though incidentally it was what led me to reject our dependence on Saudi oil as an explanation for how and why Bush had temporarily lost his way), it is worth dwelling on why it was so important.

Even before the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Muslim countries of the Middle East had been fighting against the existence of a sovereign Jewish state—*any* Jewish state—on land they believed Allah had reserved for those faithful to his prophet Muhammad. Hence hundreds of millions of Arabs and other Muslims, in control of more than two dozen countries and vast stretches of territory, had ranged themselves against a handful of Jews who then numbered well under three-quarters of a million[6] and who lived on a tiny sliver of land the size of New Jersey. But after 1967, by redefining the Muslim war against the Jewish state as one merely between the Palestinians and the Israelis, Arab propagandists succeeded brilliantly in transforming Israel's image from David to Goliath, thereby alienating the old sympathy it had enjoyed as an underdog.

Bush now reversed this reversal. Not only did he reconstruct a truthful framework by telling the Palestinian people that they had been treated for decades "as pawns in the Middle East conflict." He also insisted on being explicit about the nations that belonged in this larger picture and about what they had been up to:

> I've said in the past that nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror. To be counted on the side of peace, nations must act. Every leader actually committed to peace will end incitement to violence in official media and publicly denounce homicide bombs. Every nation actually committed to peace will stop the flow of money, equipment, and recruits to terrorists groups seeking the destruction of Israel, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbullah. Every nation committed to peace must block the shipment of Iranian supplies to these groups and oppose regimes that promote terror, like Iraq. And Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations.

In these highly significant remarks, then, Bush rebuilt the right context in which to understand the Middle East conflict. Simultaneously he made a strong start in bringing not the Palestinian Authority alone but the entire Muslim world, "friends" and enemies alike, into his conception of the war against terrorism.

Most supporters of that war—and especially those among them who were friends of Israel—praised this speech. But more than a few pro-Israel observers criticized its renewed promise of a (duly reformed) Palestinian state as "rewarding terrorism" or even as reviving the discredited Oslo "peace process."

To the extent that these responses stemmed from the view that Bush's expectations were unrealistic, they could hardly be disregarded. The great Orientalist Bernard Lewis once quipped that to ask Yasir Arafat to give up terrorism was like asking Tiger Woods to give up golf; an analogous criticism was now leveled by Daniel Pipes and several other commentators at Bush's demands both on the Palestinian Authority and on all the other despotisms in the Middle East. Pipes summed up the case with his usual incisiveness:

> Palestinian terrorism has caused terrible tragedies, but it is not the heart of the problem. Terrorism, after all, is but a tactic in the service of a war aim. That war aim—the destruction of Israel—is the heart of the problem.

In this short piece, Pipes did not apply the same point to the entire Muslim world, though he has often done so. Other commentators have also recognized the falsity of all the syrupy talk emanating from that world, in Western languages and for Western consumption, about the peace that could be reached if only Israel ended its "occupation"[7] and agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. But as is clear from what they say to one another in Arabic, neither the Palestinians nor their Muslim "brothers" have given up on the dream of

[6] Today, thanks to immigration and natural increase, the Jewish population of Israel is close to five million.

[7] To anyone who wonders why I put quotation marks around this word, I strongly recommend reading Efraim Karsh's eye-opening article, "What Occupation?," in the July-August 2002 Commentary.

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wiping Israel off the real map, just as they have already done in the maps they draw for the textbooks given to their children.[8]

EVEN THOUGH I am one of these commentators, I am still persuaded that Bush's remarks on the Middle East constituted a great breakthrough. "Whatever happened to the Bush Doctrine?" asked a critic of this speech. My answer is that in addition to the rejection of moral relativism, the holding of states responsible for the terrorists they sponsor, and the assertion of a right to preemption, it now includes a fourth pillar: namely, the assimilation of Israel's war against terrorism into our own. All four pillars together now comprise the Bush Doctrine, which—thanks to this newest addition—has become much more coherent than it was before, and consequently more solidly based.

This is not to say that the count is yet in on whether Bush will walk the walk as well as he has talked the talk. For example, shortly after the June 24 remarks, Bush and Powell were again meeting with the Saudis, the Egyptians, and the Jordanians, who all left feeling "reassured" when they should have been frightened. And there were other such episodes as well.

Yet even if Bush fails to match his deeds fully with his words, those words will exert an impact all by themselves. In many instances, Ronald Reagan's actions were not always precisely in harmony with his words: sometimes they fell well short of what the words promised, and sometimes they even conflicted with his declaratory policy. But as we have discovered from former dissidents throughout the "evil empire" of cursed memory, those words had a power of their own that enhanced immeasurably the weight of the missiles behind them.

In Afghanistan, Bush's walk matched his superb talk, in that he would settle for nothing less than a change of regime. But that, of course, was only the first step in a very long journey—and one that is still far from over even in Afghanistan. The second step will be a change of regime in Iraq—sooner rather than later, many of us hope and pray. When Saddam Hussein goes, the Iranian domino might also fall, toppled not by American military force but by the internal revolution already brewing there against the rule of the mullahs. To this revolution, Bush (though not his own State Department!) has given his blessing.

The best-case scenario is that Bush will eventually come to grips with the reality that Afghanistan and Iran are far from the only countries in the Middle East where "reform" is not enough to bring about the actions he has called upon all of them to take. In other words, as in Afghanistan and Iran, changes of regime are the sine qua non throughout the region.

Obviously it would be foolish to anticipate an overnight conversion to democracy and free markets. But I would argue that what might realistically be expected is the creation of conditions that would point in that direction, while also clearing a path to the long-overdue internal reform and modernization of Islam. I have asked the question before[9] and ask it again now: why should Islam alone forever be exempt from the processes that affected Judaism and Christianity before it?

The regimes that richly deserve to be overthrown and replaced are not confined to the three singled-out members of the axis of evil. At a minimum, the axis should extend to Syria and Lebanon and Libya, as well as "friends" of America like the Saudi royal family and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, along with the Palestinian Authority, whether headed by Arafat or one of his henchmen.

There is no denying that the alternative to these regimes could easily turn out to be worse, even (or especially) if it comes into power through democratic elections. After all, by every measure we possess, very large numbers of people in the Muslim world sympathize with Osama bin Laden and would vote for radical Islamic candidates of his stripe if they were given the chance.

To dismiss this possibility would be the height of naiveté. Nevertheless, there is a policy that can head it off, provided that the United States has the will to fight World War IV—the war against militant Islam—to a successful conclusion, and provided, too, that we then have the stomach to *impose* a new political culture on the defeated parties. This is what we did directly and unapologetically in Germany and Japan after winning World War II; it is what we have indirectly striven with some success to help achieve in the former Communist countries since winning World War III; and it is George W. Bush's ultimate aim in World War IV.

There was a song that became popular in America during World War II: "We did it before, and we can do it again." What I am trying to say to the skeptics and the defeatists of today is that yes indeed we did it before; and yes indeed we can do it again.

[8] It is to the translations circulated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) that we owe what we have now learned about what appears in Arabic-language newspapers and television broadcasts, as well as what is preached by Islamic clerics in their weekly sermons. An archive can be found on www.memri.org.

[9] In "How to Win World War IV."

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Defeating the Oil Weapon

R. James Woolsey

THE WEALTH produced by oil is what underlies, almost exclusively, the strength of three major groups in the Middle East—Islamists, both Shiite and Sunni, and Baathists—that have chosen to be at war with us. Our own dependence on that oil, and the effect this has had on our conduct over the last quarter-century, have helped encourage each of these groups to believe that we are vulnerable. Each group is anchored in a leading oil-producing state.

In Iran, the anti-American radicalism of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his Shiite followers was greatly emboldened by their success in seizing hostages in our embassy in 1979 and holding them for over a year while we, for our part, responded with yellow ribbons and a botched rescue attempt. In 1983, affiliates of the Khomeini regime in the Hizbullah movement drove us from Lebanon, and ever since then, Hizbullah and other Shiite terrorists have continued to campaign against us. To this day, the Iranian regime paints us as a diabolical threat in order to justify its repression of moderates and its increasingly hated rule at home.

The case of Saudi Arabia is no less clearcut. There, particularly in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution and of a massive attack by fanatics on the Holy Mosque in Mecca in 1979, the Saudi royal family has subordinated important aspects of its rule to the demands of the Wahhabi sect, accommodating—and promoting—the sect's hatred of the modern world and of infidels. Islamist immigrants to Saudi Arabia from Egypt and elsewhere essentially joined forces with the Wahhabis, producing an even nastier combination. In the mid-1990's, under the influence of Osama bin Laden, the target of Wahhabi- and Islamist-inspired terror shifted from regional governments like Egypt ("the near enemy") to us ("the Crusaders and the Jews"). If, in the coinage of Judith Yaphe, the Saudis have indeed struck a Faustian bargain with the Wahhabi sect, we have in a sense been assigned the role of Gretchen, the exploited party, in what is by now a long-running production.

In Iraq, the Baathists—modeling themselves after the European fascist parties of the 1930's—likewise came to regard us with implacable enmity, despite our having given them intelligence and other assistance in their war with Iran. This enmity only increased when, in 1990-1991, we decided not to permit Saddam Hussein's conquest of Kuwait to stand. Having been spared in the ensuing Gulf war, Saddam has spent the last decade developing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. He tried to assassinate former President Bush in 1993, and he explicitly, publicly, and continuously characterizes the U.S. as his country's enemy. Recently he has begun to work closely with his fellow Baathists in the

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government of Syria, a country historically more aligned with Iran.

In dealing with these three groups and other assorted Middle Eastern predators over the years, we have occasionally acted forcefully, as in Ronald Reagan's strike against Tripoli in 1986 or George H.W. Bush's conduct of the Gulf war up until the cease-fire. But generally, and until we deposed the Taliban and chased most of al Qaeda out of Afghanistan in 2001, we seemed inclined to respond to attacks on us by temporizing, retreating, or, at most, launching a few air strikes from afar.

To our enemies, the reason for our timidity has seemed plain enough. Holding only 3 percent of the world's proven remaining oil reserves, and consuming 25 percent of the world's annual production, we appear to care most of all about maintaining our reliable access to Middle Eastern oil. Our behavior at the very end of the Gulf war is frequently cited as an example of how we arrange our priorities. In the course of that war, we had encouraged the Iraqi Kurds and Shiites to rise up against Saddam Hussein, but once our own access to Kuwaiti and Saudi oil was secure, we signed a cease-fire, stood aside, and permitted hundreds of thousands of these rebels to be slaughtered by Saddam's Republican Guard.

Such is the perceived power of the oil weapon in the hands of our enemies, and such is our predicament.

II

THE MIDDLE EAST, including the Caspian Basin, is the home of nearly three-quarters of the world's proven oil reserves and about the same share of the world's "swing" capacity. The former establishes our underlying dependence, but the latter is what creates tactical power.

That power lies largely with Saudi Arabia. Although the Saudis have long been unable to increase their *basic* production capacity, which in mid-2002 stood at around 7.4 million barrels a day, they control almost 3 million barrels a day of the world's *reserve* production capacity, a figure that exceeds the total exports of all other oil-producing countries except Russia. When a crisis of some kind creates a spike in the oil spot market, the only way to increase supply quickly and keep prices stable is for the Saudis to activate this spare capacity. Thus it is they and they alone who, with their leverage over spot prices, have the power to assuage Western fears of another oil crisis—and it is a power they know how to use, not only against consumers but against other competing producers. In the apt words of the energy analysts Edward L. Morse and James Richard, this Saudi leverage is "the energy equivalent of nuclear weapons."

We had a working partnership with the Saudis for much of the cold war, offering them protection against the Soviets (and Soviet client states) in exchange for a reliable supply of cheap oil. But as Victor Davis Hanson has recently reminded us ("Our Enemies, the Saudis," COMMENTARY, July-August), this relationship has frayed badly over time. Not only has the royal family accommodated extremist Wahhabi views about the application of Islamic law, it has effectively turned over education in the kingdom to the Wahhabis and, more momentously, enabled their expansion into the rest of the world. It is well known that the religious schools of Pakistan that educated a large share of the Taliban and al Qaeda are Wahhabi. But the Wahhabis' reach has spread as far as Malaysia and Indonesia and indeed into a substantial number of organizations, lobbies, mosques, and Muslim schools in Europe, Britain, and the United States.

An analogue for Wahhabism's role in the world today might be the part played during the period after World War I by extremist forms of German nationalism. Not all German nationalists, not even all the extreme ones, became Nazis. But this form of German nationalism was the fertile soil in which Nazism grew—just as, today, Wahhabi and Islamist extremism are the soil in which al Qaeda and its sister terrorist organizations are flourishing.

There are, obviously, issues on which we must continue to work with the royal family and matters on which it is in our interest to maintain formally cordial relations. But in light of the direction taken by the Saudis for nearly a quarter-century now, it is also imperative that we take steps to reduce their hold over us. If doing so forces them and others to explore alternative ways of supporting themselves—in the mid-1990's, oil aside, the 260 million people of the Muslim Middle East exported less than the 5 million people of Finland—so much the better. Genuine economic development in that region is long overdue, and the world hardly owes anyone a living for being lucky enough to sit on top of so much its oil.

WHAT, THEN, to do about our dependence? In order to be effective, a plan to overcome our vulnerability must be both decisive and coherent. Although the result of such a program will inevitably be to improve air quality, reduce green-

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house gas emissions, and bring down our trade deficit, this is not and should not be conceived of as an energy plan for its own sake but rather as the energy component of our strategy for the war we are in. As such, it must be realistic, and it should take effect promptly. That means discarding two approaches to the problem that have enjoyed substantial support in the U.S. but whose implementation would have, at best, a negligible effect.

For one thing, we will not come anywhere near being able to break our dependence by producing more oil domestically. As I noted earlier, we now hold only 3 percent of the world's proven reserves. Three-quarters of the oil wells that have been drilled in the world since the mid-19th century are in the lower 48 states: we are not going to find much more there than has already been found. Even exploiting Alaska's National Wildlife Refuge would increase our share of world reserves to only 3.3 percent. Offshore exploration may yield something, but surely not enough to make a real dent. In the end, our appetite for oil will still be eight times more gluttonous than what we can satisfy from our own resources—and as oil fields in other regions become depleted and more and more expensive to exploit, this gluttony will give the Middle East growing leverage over us.

For another thing, it will not do us any good to increase our production of transportation fuel by means of exotic processes that will result in prices substantially above the equivalent of oil at $30 a barrel. As they have done before, the Saudis can undercut all such technologies by using their swing capacity to increase supply and lower prices until our thirst forces us to capitulate—at which point they can raise the price again.

The Saudis' swing capacity must be, indeed, the ultimate target of our strategy. But if protection against their use of this capacity is our ultimate goal, pursuit of that goal must be combined with three other, underlying changes: reducing our overall demand for oil; bringing major new production from outside the Middle East into the world market; and moving toward affordable alternative fuels for transportation. Accordingly, the approach I propose has four complementary elements. Each of them has independent merit, but each is insufficient on its own, if not actually risky. Implemented as a package, however, the four individual elements can augment each other's effectiveness and, together, overcome inevitable snags and delays.

III

FIRST, ANY serious effort to block the use of the oil weapon must reduce the demand for oil generally. We need to improve efficiency—a better term than "conservation," since we are talking not just about using less but about doing more with less.

The last time we traveled down this road, we actually acquitted ourselves quite well. In the six years after the 1979 oil shock, Americans cut oil use by 15 percent and Persian Gulf imports by 87 percent—while our economy grew by 16 percent. In the early and mid-80's we improved gas mileage in new domestic cars by 7 miles per gallon (mpg). By 1987, OPEC's share of the world market had dropped from 52 to 30 percent.*

Technology has moved far in two decades, but we do not seem to have gotten the message nearly so clearly as we did in 1979. Much of the public is averse to increased gasoline taxes, and also demonstrates a marked preference for large cars, trucks, and SUV's. But we need not push for smaller vehicles *per se*; we need only care about gasoline consumption. This means encouraging the widespread use of hybrid gas/electric vehicles—the first hybrid SUV's now coming on the market should get over 30 mpg—and adopting other fuel-efficiency improvements through such means as lower aerodynamic drag, lighter materials, better tires, and so forth. We do not have to resort to tiny cars—or even mandated fuel-efficiency standards as such—in order to effect a huge difference in oil consumption.

A whole range of steps is available on this front. Twelve years ago, the California legislature voted financial incentives to reward purchasers of efficient cars. (Unfortunately the measure was vetoed.) Today we should be able to devise Detroit-friendly incentives like tax credits and rebates to encourage the scrapping of older, less efficient vehicles and promote the buying of hybrids, a technology that has much to recommend it over other solutions (like automotive fuel cells) whose affordable production is still years off and/or whose implementation would require substantial changes in our transportation infrastructure.

IN THE meantime—and here is the second component of the strategy—we should be helping Russia substantially improve its share of the world's oil market.

The level of oil production in Russia is already high, but, thanks to the country's vast untapped re-

* Hunter and Amory Lovins, "Mobilizing Energy Solutions," *American Prospect*, January 28, 2002.

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serves, it could be substantially higher; Jeffrey E. Garten of the Yale School of Management has estimated that the current output of 6.9 million barrels per day could expand by at least 50 percent. The main obstacle here is the deplorable state of the country's pipelines, most of which (unlike the Russian oil companies themselves) are still government-owned. In many places, pipelines are lacking altogether. We should therefore help Russia obtain Western investment to modernize and expand its pipeline network while urging Europe to import more Russian oil and, by means of incentives, encouraging American oil companies to cooperate with Russian companies in the Middle East and elsewhere.

There are, admittedly, constraints on Russia's ability to provide a Saudi-style reserve capacity that could be "surged" as needed. (One such constraint is the Russian winter.) But as a supplier, Russia is likely to prove much more reliable than any regime in today's chaotic Middle East, and a steady shift of much of the world's oil purchases toward that country would thus have an overall stabilizing effect. It would also provide a tangible quid pro quo for the recent statesmanship of President Putin, who in more than one way has seemed definitively to cast Russia's lot with the West. And it would offer a nicely bracing reminder to the Saudis and other members of OPEC that their cartel's days may be numbered.

Another reason to take this step is more broadly strategic: to give Russia time to diversify its economy. We have a real interest in encouraging Russian prosperity, since this is the best way to foster the growth of a middle class and the kind of stability that can give solid roots to political liberalization and the development of the rule of law. Russia has serious problems: corruption, criminality, proliferation of nuclear and missile technology, brutality in Chechnya. But at this point it looks far more likely to develop democratically than does Saudi Arabia, and it would be decidedly to our benefit that it do so.

THE THIRD element consists of taking immediate steps toward replacing petroleum-based transportation fuels with domestically produced alternatives, especially those derived from wastes generally and more particularly from cellulosic biomass, otherwise known as plant material. Senator Richard Lugar and I assessed the case for doing this over three years ago,* and that case has since grown much stronger. The intervening years have seen the further development both of genetically modified biocatalysts to produce ethanol from cellulosic biomass and of other promising waste-to-fuel technologies such as thermal de-polymerization that, unlike incineration, create no pollution and leave no streams of secondary waste.

We are not talking about your father's ethanol—corn-derived fuel that requires substantial energy to produce and will never cover more than a tiny share of our needs. By contrast, fuels produced from waste and cellulosic biomass can be much cheaper to manufacture and, being fashioned from very inexpensive and widely available material, would likely be competitive with gasoline even if the price of petroleum should move as low as $10 to $15 a barrel. Nor would large-scale production of ethanol from cellulosic biomass require introducing marginal land into cultivation or replacing existing crops on existing farmland. Lee Lynd of the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth estimates that, by using a little over half of the prairie grass growing naturally on cropland now idled by federal conservation programs, we could produce enough biomass-derived ethanol to fill a quarter of our annual gasoline needs, even at present vehicle mileages.

The vehicles most of us own today can already use biomass-derived ethanol, if only in proportions of up to 10 percent. But there are at least two million flexible-fuel vehicles on the road that can burn up to 85-percent ethanol, and it would be a very simple and cheap matter to adapt the technology to all new cars, the only requirements being a differently programmed computer chip in the fuel system and a different kind of plastic in the fuel line. (Virtually all cars sold in Brazil already have this modification.) To get a feel for the results: a 20-mpg vehicle using 85-percent ethanol would realize well over 100 mpg of gasoline.

There are added benefits. Any fuel mixture above 22-percent ethanol burns more cleanly in all respects than gasoline, and both the production and use of cellulosic ethanol add essentially no new carbon to the atmosphere. Then, too, using domestically produced fuels from biomass and waste can substantially reduce our huge trade deficit.

Finally, consider the use of biomass- and waste-derived fuels in *higher*-mileage vehicles, like hybrids. Using 85-percent ethanol, a full-sized hybrid passenger car that gets 40 mpg would be realizing the equivalent of about 250 mpg of gasoline. The combined effect on our oil use from improved fuel efficiency *and* the use of biomass- and waste-derived fuels might thus be staggering indeed.

WHICH BRINGS us to the fourth and most crucial component of the strategy. Even as we implement the rest of the program, an aggressive use of our Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) is essen-

* "The New Petroleum," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 1999.

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tial. Otherwise, the Saudis can try to use their swing capacity and the threat of economic recession to prevent us from reducing our use of oil.

The Saudis do not enjoy infinite flexibility in wielding their oil weapon. The kingdom has been living beyond its means for many years: the government has run deficits since 1983, domestic debt substantially exceeds gross domestic product, and in spite of runaway spending, the per-capita standard of living has dropped by half since 1980. The royal family rightly fears severe social unrest if there are further reductions in its welfare programs. So *lengthy* cutbacks or reductions in basic output are not really tolerable. And there are also logistical problems: much Saudi infrastructure, including electricity and desalination plants, requires a steady supply of the natural gas that is produced in association with the production of oil.

All of these factors enhance the utility of our SPR as a counterweapon. By selling from it and then replenishing it in a timely fashion, we could limit the Saudis' ability to use their own reserve capacity to manipulate the market. We could, for example, sell SPR oil on the spot market to counter any actual Saudi cut, or any refusal to increase production in a crisis (when the spot price typically rises). More: a number of energy experts have pointed out that if we sold oil drawn from the SPR to offset Saudi cutbacks, we could use the funds received to buy oil futures, which are ordinarily priced below the current spot market.

Thus, if a crisis caused the spot price to rise to $39 a barrel and we sold 10 million barrels, the proceeds from this sale might purchase as much as 15 million barrels for delivery two years later at, say, $26 a barrel. Alternatively, we could replace exactly the amount we had sold and use the remaining cash for some other purpose. It is true that spot oil prices cannot be kept completely stable, but aggressive management of the SPR nevertheless holds out the possibility of denying to the Saudis the ability to cause severe recessions here as they did in 1973-74 and 1978-80.

We could exercise even greater leverage if we *added* several hundred million barrels to the current SPR or, following Jeffrey Garten's advice, doubled its size to a billion barrels, perhaps giving Russia a preference in selling us the oil and proposing that other energy importers like China, India, and Brazil accumulate substantially larger reserves as well. A total reserve in oil-consuming countries approaching 2 billion barrels would constitute about two years of Saudi swing production and effectively deprive the Saudis of their principal oil weapon.

To be sure, the Saudis and their OPEC partners would oppose any such use of the SPR or other reserves, no doubt claiming to be shocked—shocked—that we would ever consider letting politics affect oil prices. The short answer to this is that we are at war. The somewhat longer answer is that in any case the oil market is hardly the model of a classical free market.

OPEC has its own mechanisms for administering its cartel, and the Saudis have their weapon. Under current circumstances, we can and should do what is necessary to counter *their* continuing politicization of the market, including by means of a reasonable international framework in which representatives of major oil-importing nations can meet in a crisis and agree to manage their reserves according to certain criteria. Even if it should prove too difficult to do this internationally, we can do much on our own, especially with the advantage of a billion-barrel reserve.

IV

But we must act, for the consequences of not acting are dire indeed. Consider a parallel dilemma, in a hypothetical world. Suppose Torquemada and the clique of Dominicans around him who managed the Spanish Inquisition had survived unreconstructed to exercise powerful influence within a 21st-century Spanish monarchy that was as enduringly unreceptive to democratic values as the real Spanish monarchy of the 15th and 16th centuries. Suppose that this reactionary monarchy controlled 25 percent of the world's oil. Suppose further that a portion of the rest of the Spanish-speaking world—in governments heavily influenced by Spain's power and by organizations reflecting Torquemada's attitude toward Jews, Muslims, and heretics—controlled an additional 40 percent of the world's oil reserves.

Torquemada and his Dominicans were given to the auto-da-fé. The Wahhabis are more given to lopping off limbs and heads—and smashing passenger aircraft into skyscrapers. Those differences aside, the problem posed both to non-Wahhabi Muslims and to the rest of the world today is not unlike the problem that would be posed by such a hypothetical 21st-century, Torquemada-backed monarchy reinforced by oil. If we do not forge a strategy and act now, we will leave major aspects of our national fate in the hands of a regime that was once our ally but has fallen increasingly under the sway of fanatics who have chosen to spread hatred of us, indeed of freedom itself.

This hatred fires and sustains those who make war on us with the intention of destroying our way of life. Their power derives from their oil, and it is time to break their sword.

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Can Any Good Come of Radical Islam?

Francis Fukuyama & Nadav Samin

WHAT IS going on in the Muslim world? Why does it produce suicide hijackers on the one hand and, on the other, lethargic and haphazardly capitalist societies that have delivered neither economic development nor democracy? A good if partial answer to these questions—partial because it is limited to the Arab region of that world—can be found in a United Nations "development report" issued in July. As the UN assessment concludes, the entire Arab sector, with all its oil wealth, is "richer than it is developed." Its economies are stagnant, illiteracy is widespread, political freedom is hardly to be found, and its inhabitants, especially its women, are denied the basic "capabilities" and "opportunities" of the modern world.

The UN report—written, significantly, by a group of Arab intellectuals—was commissioned well before last fall's attacks on the U.S. But its pertinence to those attacks has seemed clear enough to commentators. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* called it the key to understanding "the milieu that produced bin Ladenism, and will reproduce it if nothing changes." An editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* found "little wonder" in the fact that "such an isolated culture became a breeding ground for the Islamic fundamentalism that spawned September 11."

The Islamism of Osama bin Laden and his followers is indeed inseparable from the developmental failures of the world's Arab societies. All the same, however, it would be a mistake to conceive of the Islamist movement as nothing more than an expression of those failures. The phenomenon of radical Islam is more complicated than that, and in all sorts of surprising ways its long-term effect on the entire orbit of Islamic society may turn out to be more complicated still.

LAST SEPTEMBER'S attacks against the United States were carried out by a group of Muslims led by a gaunt, bearded ascetic sitting in a cave in Afghanistan and spouting unfathomable rhetoric. So all-consuming was the hijackers' hatred of America that they were willing to blow *themselves* up for their cause—something that set them apart from earlier generations of terrorists. Where did this zeal, so foreign to the modern democratic temperament, come from?

On the part of many observers, the immediate impulse was to attribute it to deep cultural factors, and in particular to the teachings of fundamentalist Islam. And of course there was, and is, much to be said for this view. In particular, the fact that, far from repudiating bin Laden, Muslims and Westerners tended to line up on opposite sides in their interpretation of the events of September 11 gave

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credence to the paradigm of the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, who predicted a number of years ago that the post-cold-war world would give rise to a "clash of civilizations."

Still, foolish as it would be to downplay the role of religious or "civilizational" factors, it will not do simply to call Osama bin Laden an Islamic fundamentalist. For the Islamism of which he is a symbol and a spokesman is not a movement aimed at restoring some archaic or pristine form of Islamic practice. As a number of observers have argued, including most recently the Iranian scholars Ladan and Roya Boroumand in the *Journal of Democracy*, it is best understood not as a traditional movement but as a very modern one.

Groups like al Qaeda, the Boroumands write, owe an explicit debt to 20th-century European doctrines of the extreme Right and Left. One stream of influence can be traced to Hassan al-Banna, the schoolteacher who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. From Italy's Fascists, al-Banna borrowed the idea of unquestioning loyalty to a charismatic leader, modeling the slogan of his paramilitary organization—"action, obedience, silence"—on Mussolini's injunction to "believe, obey, fight." Taking a cue from the Nazis, he placed great emphasis on the Muslim Brotherhood's youth wing and on the marriage of the physical and the spiritual, of Islam with activism. Unsurprisingly, al-Banna also taught his followers to expect not encouragement but repression from traditional Islamic authorities.

A second European source of Islamism can be traced to Maulana Mawdudi, who founded the Jamaat-e-Islami movement in Pakistan in the early 1940's. A journalist well-versed in Marxist thought, Mawdudi advocated struggle by an Islamic "revolutionary vanguard" against both the West *and* traditional Islam. As the Boroumands observe, he was perhaps the first to attach "the adjective 'Islamic' to such distinctively Western terms as 'revolution,' 'state,' and 'ideology.'"

These strands of the radical Right and Left eventually came together in the person of Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian who became the Muslim Brotherhood's chief ideologist after World War II. In his most important work, *Signposts Along the Road*, Qutb called for a monolithic state led by an Islamic party, advocating the use of every violent means necessary to achieve that end. The society he envisioned would be classless, one in which the "selfish individual" of liberal societies would be abolished and the "exploitation of man by man" would end. This, as the Boroumands point out, was "Leninism in an Islamist dress," and it is the creed embraced by most present-day Islamists.

Though developed among Sunnis, this virulent ideological mix reached the Shiite world as well, most notably through its influence on Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Indeed, the Iranian revolution of 1979 conferred on Islamism a degree of religious respectability that it had never before possessed. But the fact that the movement could so easily bridge the bitter Shiite-Sunni divide also suggests just how sharply divorced it is from Islamic history and custom. As the Boroumands conclude, the key attributes of Islamism—"the aestheticization of death, the glorification of armed force, the worship of martyrdom, and 'faith in the propaganda of the deed'"—have little precedent in Islam but have been defining features of modern totalitarianism. The seeming rigor of Osama bin Laden's theology belies the reality of his highly heterodox beliefs.

SO MUCH for the ideological side of things. On the sociological side, there is still another close parallel between Islamism and the rise of European fascism. Though Hitler was a great entrepreneur of ideas, the roots of his movement, as described in classic analyses like Fritz Stern's *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (1974), lay in the rapid industrialization of central Europe. In the course of a single generation, millions of peasants had moved from tightly-knit village communities to large, impersonal cities, losing in the process a range of familiar cultural norms and signposts.

This rapid transition—captured in Ferdinand Tönnies's famous distinction between Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society)—was perhaps the most powerful impetus behind modern nationalism. Deprived of local sources of identity, displaced villagers found new social bonds in language, ethnicity, and—ultimately—in the mythopoetic propaganda of Europe's extreme Right. Though the various right-wing parties pretended to revive ancient traditions—pre-Christian Germanic ones in the case of Nazism, Roman ones in the case of the Italian Fascists—their doctrines were really a syncretic mishmash, old symbols and new ideas brought together by the most up-to-date forms of communications technology.

Islamism, as the late Ernest Gellner was among the first to note, has followed a similar path. Over the last several decades, most Muslim societies have undergone a social transformation not unlike that of Europe in the late 19th century. Large numbers of villagers and tribesmen have moved to the vast urban slums of Cairo, Algiers, and Amman, leaving

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behind the variegated, often preliterate Islam of the countryside. Islamism has filled the void, offering a new identity based on a puritanical, homogenized creed. Syncretist in the manner of fascism, it unites traditional religious symbols and rhetoric with the ideology of revolutionary action.

Some observers, especially after September 11, have suggested that the real engine of Islamism's growth is poverty, but this is not the case. According to the recent UN report, for example, the Arab world actually compares favorably to other developing regions when it comes to preventing abject want. Rather, like European fascism before it, Islamism is bred by rapid social dislocation. More often than not, its leaders and propagandists are newcomers to the middle or upper classes. Islamism introduces these educated but often lonely and alienated individuals to a larger *umma* (community) of believers, from Tangier to Jakarta to London. Through the magic of the cassette tape recorder (in Khomeini's case) or video (for bin Laden), they become members of a vibrant, if dangerous and destructive, international community.

SEEING ISLAMISM for what it really is goes beyond correct taxonomy. It also points us in the direction of an important, if seemingly perverse, question: could it, like both fascism and Communism before it, serve inadvertently as a modernizing force, preparing the way for Muslim societies that can respond not destructively but constructively to the challenge of the West?

The question is not as absurd as it may sound. Comparisons are especially tricky here, but the Bolsheviks succeeded in creating an industrialized, urbanized Russia, and Hitler managed to get rid of the Junkers and much of the class stratification that had characterized prewar Germany. Through a tortuous and immensely costly path, both of these "isms" cleared away some of the premodern underbrush that had obstructed the growth of liberal democracy. There are, of course, much safer and more peaceful routes toward modernization, like those taken by countries like Korea or Britain or the United States, and less expensive paths to modernity were surely available to Russia and Germany. But one has to deal with what one has, and in Islamic cultures, in any case, there is arguably much more underbrush to be cleared away. If Islamism is directed as much against traditional forms of Islam as against the West, could it, too, be a source of such creative destruction?

There are myriad ways in which not only Islamic practice but the rigid legal framework within which it is encased has obstructed change. The economic historian Timur Kuran has documented in painstaking detail a series of traditional Islamic institutions whose inflexibility and legalism have served as immense barriers to development. Interest rates are fixed by religious authorities, schooling focuses on rote learning of religious texts and discourages critical thinking, women are kept out of political and economic life, and so on. Even an institution like the *waqf*, or traditional Islamic charity, which could serve as a bulwark of civil society in a reformed Islamic order, fixes the bequests of wealthy individuals in perpetuity, with no opportunity for adaptation to changing circumstances.

Many of these same constraints existed historically in the Judeo-Christian West, and were eliminated or ameliorated only after long struggle. All of them continue to exist in the Islamic present, and can only be removed through the exercise of political power. Islamism has already demonstrated the capability of doing this, and even of accommodating Western norms when it has to: though Khomeini brought back the chador, or veil, for women, he also reluctantly sanctioned women's right to vote in Iranian elections, a practice (won under the Shah) that he had once likened to prostitution.

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood as well as other, even more radical Islamist organizations have created a layer of voluntary associations standing between the family and the state. It was, for example, Islamist charities that stepped into the breach at the time of the 1992 Cairo earthquake, providing important social services unavailable from the inept and corrupt Egyptian state. The Islamists clearly hope to reunite religion and political power one day, which would be a disaster. But they are learning—and inculcating—habits of association and independent action that, if somehow divorced from their radical ideology, might yet help lay the groundwork of a true civil society.

THERE IS another area in which the reactionary ideas of the Islamists may play a potentially progressive role, and this has to do with the fundamental sources of authority and legitimacy in the Islamic world.

The traditional system of Islamic jurisprudence—with its rigid rules and hierarchies—has been under attack, in one way or another, since at least the 19th century. The most important early figures in this effort were modernizers, like the Iranian Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and his student, the

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Egyptian reformer Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). Abduh was among the first to depart from the rigidly textual form of interpretation that had characterized the Sunni world since the earliest caliphates. In his view, human reason was the only appropriate tool for applying the fundamental truths of the Qur'an and the Sunna (the traditions of the Prophet). Appointed mufti of Egypt toward the end of his life, Abduh issued rulings reflecting, in the words of one scholar, his desire "to render the religion of Islam entirely adaptable to the requirements of modern civilization."

The implications of this turn were profound. Though the institutional base of orthodox Sunni Islam remained intact, the long-sealed gates of doctrinal explication were unhinged. Like a Muslim Luther, Abduh shook up the clerical establishment by reviving, under the influence of his mentor al-Afghani, the possibility of independent legal interpretation. His example gave unprecedented latitude to all subsequent construers of Islamic tradition, whether saints or demagogues—the latter including anti-Western radicals like the Muslim Brotherhood's Sayyid Qutb and, eventually, Osama bin Laden.

In the battle for interpretative power, it is no coincidence that the primary breeding ground for Islamism has been the brittle oligarchies of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Both regimes have co-opted the traditional clergy, forcing the populist current of Islam into back alleys and store-front mosques and turning it into an ideological guerrilla movement. Detached from the moorings of tradition, the Islamists have proved adept at manipulating the symbols of faith and appropriating them for their own revolutionary purposes.

Osama bin Laden's famous 1998 *fatwa*, in which he declared jihad on the United States and any American fair game for his followers, is a case in point. Though the content of this declaration is itself contrary to traditional Islamic moral teachings—as the eminent Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis has observed, "At no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder"—the most notably radical thing about it is the identity of its author. Osama bin Laden has no credentials as a religious authority and no right, under traditional Islamic practice, to issue a *fatwa*. It is a bit like Hitler issuing a papal encyclical, or Lenin a decree in the name of the Russian Orthodox church. The mere fact that bin Laden was willing to cross this line shows the extent to which Islamism has undermined traditional Islamic legal authority. But a line crossed in the name of waging all-out war against the West may yet be crossed in the name of healthier purposes.

WE SHOULD not kid ourselves. The modernization of Islam is hardly imminent, and it will not occur without enormous struggle. There are several deeply imbedded obstacles in Islamic society, not least the often-noted lack of a tradition of secular politics. To many Muslims, what may simply seem more "natural" is a totalizing ideology that seeks to unite society and the state within a single revolutionary whole. Nor is it clear, despite the UN's recent report, that the Muslim world is capable of the realistic self-appraisal necessary for a modernizing shift to occur.

Many non-Western societies, after all, have tried the path of violent resistance to the enormous military, economic, and cultural power of the West. It was only when faced with defeat and domination that nations like China and Japan undertook a serious study of what, in Lewis's phrase, "went wrong." Joining the West when they could not beat it, they adopted a variety of Western institutions while retaining a core of their own culture. This process of social learning has been much slower in Muslim societies; for Arabs in particular, it has been all too convenient to blame Israel and the United States for their own lack of progress.

If the wait for Muslim modernization is likely to be a long one, how, then, should the West respond in the short term as it faces the continued prospect of terrorism, suicide bombings, and weapons of mass destruction? The determined application of military power is certainly part of the answer. European fascism did not fall because of the inherent wickedness of its animating ideas; having brought havoc to the societies that embraced its doctrines, it lost legitimacy because it was crushed on the battlefield. Just as Osama bin Laden and his cause gained status and support with the successful attacks of September 11, so the rout of al Qaeda from Afghanistan and continuing U.S. operations against radical Islamic terrorism are absolutely key to dampening Islamist fervor.

But the more important struggle must take place within the Islamic world itself. For too long, genuine Muslim modernizers have sat in the wings while traditionalists and Islamists battled one another on center stage. The great need now is for Western-oriented Muslims to take advantage of the turmoil created by September 11 to promote a more genuinely liberal form of their religion.

There is reason to think that such an opening exists. Though many Muslims continue to favor Islamism in the abstract, the movement has left a disastrous record everywhere it has come to power. Saudi Arabia, home of the extremist Wahhabi

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strain of fundamentalist Islam, is one of the most corrupt and mismanaged regimes in the contemporary world. Even with the country's vast oil wealth, per-capita income fell in real terms from $11,500 in 1980 to $6,700 in 1999. As for Afghanistan under the Taliban, ordinary Afghans were overjoyed to be liberated from their yoke, and eagerly returned to such simple modern pleasures as watching cheesy Indian movies on their long-buried VCR's.

It is the Iranians, who, having lived under Islamist rule for the past generation, are most likely to lead the Islamic world out of its current impasse. Though Western hopes for the seemingly reform-minded President Khatami have proved misplaced, there is one basic demographic fact working in favor of eventual liberalization: 70 percent of Iran's population is now under the age of 30, and from all reports these young people tend to abhor the Islamic theocracy. Having brought the first Islamist regime to power, Iran would set a powerful example for the rest of the Middle East—and beyond—if it were to move toward liberalization on its own steam.

In the end, it is as important not to overestimate the strength of Islamism as it is fatal to underestimate it. It has little to offer Arabs, much less the rest of the Muslim world. Its glorification of violence has already produced a sharp counterreaction, and—provided it is defeated—its "successes" may yet help pave the way for long-overdue reform. If so, this would certainly not be the first time that the cunning of history has produced so astounding a result.

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Judaism Beyond Words: Part 2

David Gelernter

Introduction

THERE ARE 13.2 million Jews in the world, which in population terms puts world Jewry in the same league as Guatemala and nowhere near Madagascar. Yet no nation has been more important to Western civilization than this scarred, scattered, and exhausted people—passionately self-doubting, fractured, hounded and hated, occasionally even admired, and (in any case) gradually dissolving. Archimedes said that if he had a place to set up his lever, he could move the world. If God has a lever, the Jews are it, and evidently He knows exactly where to set it up. Jews have moved the world repeatedly.

Yet Judaism itself is all but unknown. Plenty of educated and sophisticated people (Jews included) believe that, to discover Judaism's view of some topic, you look it up in the Hebrew Bible. This is not merely wrong but absurd, like identifying the Atlantic Ocean with the basin that contains it, and forgetting about the water. The Bible is Judaism's ocean bed. The substance of Judaism is the Talmud and more than two millennia's worth of rabbinic literature.

To know Judaism, you must know its fundamental beliefs—Maimonides listed them in the 12th century. But Judaism is not in the list. You must know God's 613 commandments to the Jewish people; but Judaism is not there either, not entirely. You must study Jewish history, but Judaism is encompassed in no history book. Judaism is a still, small voice that is startling in its murmurous subtlety. Its essence is a series of images that overhang its broad, deep, sacred literature like mist over the sea—images of inscrutable patient power that brood over human history, although precious few humans have ever seen them.

Images are the human mind's most eloquent, pregnant way of thinking. But they are hard to pin down in words, and nowadays we are especially inept at dealing with them: we have tended, in modern times, to expunge images from intellectual life almost entirely. Understanding Judaism requires (merely) an intellectual counterrevolution. We must come to grips with images.

I am examining several of Judaism's image-themes in a series that began in the May COMMENTARY. The first image was separation, which underlies manifestations of Judaism as far-flung as the escape from Egypt through the thrust-open Red Sea, the rolled-open Torah scroll held high at the climax of synagogue worship, and the gap in time created by the Sabbath. This month, in a piece that is intended once again for readers who do not necessarily have any prior know-

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ledge of Judaism, I will discuss an aspect of separation that has become a theme in its own right: the separation between man and God. A single paradoxical image captures the separateness and connectedness of God and man—captures God's inconceivable transcendence and His ever-present nearness.

The Veil

FOUR EMBODIMENTS of Jewish faith seem unrelated but are united by one deep image. Although Judaism does not go in for mysteries, each one is mysterious.

First, the mezuzah—a small case containing a rolled-up parchment sheet with specified verses from the Torah written on one side and a three-letter name for God on the other. The case with its sheet is fixed slantwise to a doorframe. A traditional case has a small window to let you see God's name on the back of the parchment.

The mezuzah is based on a biblical injunction to write the words of God "on the doorposts of your house" (Deuteronomy 6:9). An early form was discovered with the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. The Talmud gave it normative shape. New practices evolved over the centuries; some were accepted (God's name on the parchment's back), others rejected.

The point of the mezuzah is explicit in the Torah: to make Jews contemplate God's word. The inscribed biblical verses must be written perfectly, exactly as specified. Maimonides spells out the location of each ornamental penstroke. So why does the text turn its back on us? Why is it traditional to *hide* the text inside a case that screens it from view, except for one word on the back?

Second: the carefully prepared horn, usually a ram's horn, called a shofar. We hear the shofar during the month leading to the New Year, on New Year's day (Rosh Hashanah), and on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

The shofar speaks no words and plays no tune. The rabbis describe it as "wailing," "moaning," "crying out." Judaism is a highly articulate religion; distinctly a musical one also. Why does it focus such intense concentration on this inarticulate, unmusical, but human-like sound? On this wordless, tuneless wailing?

Third: the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Judaism's holiest site. It once helped support the gigantic, built-up platform of the Temple Mount; thus it is a physical remnant of the holy Temple. But it was not always Judaism's holiest shrine. Until the late 15th century, the Mount of Olives ranked higher—which seems only reasonable, because the Mount of Olives offers a commanding view of the whole Temple Mount, while the Wall is at the bottom of a valley and has no openings or windows. Standing right in front of it, you have a vista of nothing.

Holy or not, a great ruined wall of gigantic undecorated stones should be (you would think) forbidding. But worshipers often stand as close as they can. You see them leaning their foreheads against the wall. Sometimes you see them kissing the stones. We take the scene for granted. Yet what other religion focuses such tenderness on a (seemingly) overpowering blank? And why did this blank wall become the holiest site in Judaism?

Finally there is God's unsayable proper name, which was blanked-out on purpose. This four-letter name (the "tetragrammaton") occurs throughout the Hebrew Bible, though with diminishing frequency in the later books of "Writings," the last of the Bible's three divisions. Originally the name was pronounced as it is written. (Ancient biblical manuscripts were written with consonants only, but the vowels can be inferred.) It would have been the most familiar name in Israel. Later it came to be pronounced only during Yom Kippur services at the restored Second Temple in Jerusalem. Later still, after the loss of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., it was no longer pronounced at all. When observant Jews see the name today, they substitute—if they are praying—a generic word for God. If they are not praying they do not even go that far; they say only *Hashem*, The Name.

The Name is another thing we take for granted, and another mystery. The dominant note in Israel's

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relationship to God is love. Hence the central verse of the Torah, which is also inscribed on the parchment of the mezuzah: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." Ordinarily we want to say out loud, not hush up, the name of a thing we love; listen to a devout Jew say *Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem, in the course of prayer and you hear love talking. Moreover, the word "name" functions in Hebrew as it does in such English expressions as "to make a name for yourself"; the Hebrew phrase "men of name" means "men of repute." For a name to be hidden or hushed up is a gesture with dark overtones.

Why do Jews refuse to name the divine object of their devotion?

The Resonant Mezuzah

WE CAN read the meaning of all four of these things, and see the image that unifies them, if we go back to the start and notice a biblical passage that resonates with the mezuzah. The biblical passage I have in mind does not *explain* the mezuzah; nor does the mezuzah explain the passage. But the resonance between them—thinking of one makes you think of the other, as plucking one string can make another hum—suggests that a single deep idea underlies both.

The mezuzah resonates with this passage: "As My glory passes by," God says to Moses, "I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and screen you with My hand until I have passed. And I will remove My hand and you will see My back; but My face will not be seen" (Exodus 33:22-23).

The traditional mezuzah allows us to see God's name on the parchment's back—but the text on its face remains hidden, and cannot be seen. One of Judaism's deepest thoughts is that the ineffable, transcendent reality of God can be closer to you if it is *separated* from you—by a veil, a tangible screen. You cannot see God but you can see the veil; in fact, touch it; in fact, kiss it. You can approach the veil knowing that God, who is unimaginable and inconceivable, is nevertheless on the other side.

Maimonides writes in the *Guide to the Perplexed*: "You come nearer to the apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, with every increase in the negations regarding Him." This screen or veil or (in Hebrew) *masveh* functions, in other words, not only to separate but also to connect. It embodies God's inconceivableness, and simultaneously draws God and man tightly together.

THE VEIL-IMAGE is ubiquitous in Judaism. Moses' face gave off light after his contact with God on Sinai—and thereafter he "veiled" or "screened" it (Exodus 34:33) so as not to scare people. Actually, according to the great 12th-century poet and exegete Abraham ibn Ezra, Moses veiled his face not to mollify the people but in deference to the divine origin of the light. Here the screen or veil symbolizes God's transcendence.

A literal veil over the face transforms itself into a tallis or tallit, the fringed ritual garment that men wear during morning prayer. It reappears as a curtain screening the holy ark in synagogue, or the pair of curtains screening the Holy of Holies at the Temple in Jerusalem. According to Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, the most eminent of all medieval commentators), God wrapped Himself in a tallis when Moses, hidden in that cleft of rock, was allowed a glimpse of His glory. That tallis would have been a literal veil between God and man. In the Zohar, the light of creation and the light that shines from Moses' face when he descends from Sinai are the same light. Moses wraps himself in that light (the Zohar says) "as in a tallis, as it is written: 'He wraps Himself in light as in a garment'" (Psalms 104:2).

A Jewish male wraps himself in a tallis for prayer every morning. Many have the custom of pulling the tallis over their heads when they say the prayer called *Sh'moneh Esrei*. To be a legitimate religious act, this particular prayer (the Talmud asserts) must be said in a specific frame of mind: the worshiper must imagine himself to be in God's presence.

The sacred screen, with the awful, ineffable presence of God on the far side, can be as soft as cotton on your face.

In the synagogue ceremony of the Priestly Blessing (performed every day in Israel, and on major festivals elsewhere), each kohen—each man of priestly descent—covers his face and his lifted hands with his tallis. The other congregants avert their eyes as the kohanim all chant together: "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord let His countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance to you and grant you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). The kohen is imbued for a moment (as Moses had been) with the Lord's light, and the tallis once again embodies the sacred veil.

In the First Temple—King Solomon's Temple, built in the 10th century B.C.E. and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.—the tablets of the covenant were hidden inside the ark; the ark-cover

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was screened by the wings of the cherubim, and the whole ark was screened off within the Holy of Holies. In most Ashkenazic synagogues today, the ark containing the Torah scrolls has a curtain called the *parokhet* hanging in front, screening the doors from view. To remove a Torah scroll, we part the curtain, then open the ark and remove the scroll. Thus, a sequence of screens: we pass through the first, through the second, and finally (after carrying the scroll to the reading stand) come face to face with the actual words on parchment.

Then, the texts inside the tefillin or "phylacteries" that a man wears on his forehead and arm during morning prayers. These are also hidden, sealed inside opaque, near-cubical black boxes—like the tablets inside the ark, like the ark itself inside the cube of the Holy of Holies. The Talmud says that the tefillin, the mezuzah, and the tallis are all connected: "Israel is beloved. The Holy One Blessed be He has surrounded them with mitzvot [commands]: tefillin on their heads, tefillin on their arms, tsitsit [the knotted fringes at the corners of the tallis] on their clothes, mezuzah on their doors."

"Israel is beloved." For the great Israeli story teller Shmuel Yosef Agnon, who died in 1970, a tallis symbolizes the love between God and Israel: "He Himself, in His glory, sits and weaves—strand on strand—a tallis all grace and all mercy, for the congregation of Israel to deck itself in." The blankness of the "sacred screen" is associated not only with God's transcendence but with His love. It separates God and Israel the way groom and bride are separated. Love converges on the veil, pressing from both sides. When God says to Moses, "I will shield you with My hand," we understand it as a protective, loving gesture. Moses is shielded by God's love from God's power. And when we ask (in the words of the prayerbook) for God to "spread over us the shelter of Your peace," we ask Him to do what He did for Moses—to screen or protect or shelter us with the veil of His love.

The hidden words inside the opaque black tefillin boxes read, in part: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." The same commandment, as I have mentioned, is hidden inside the mezuzah. It is customary to kiss the tefillin before putting them on and after removing them. As we finish putting them on, we recite verses from the book of Hosea, in which God says to Israel: "I will betroth you to Me forever." And many observant Jews have the custom, when they enter or leave a room, of touching the mezuzah and then kissing the fingers that touched. God is hidden, like the mezuzah text, separated from Israel by a sacred screen or bridal veil or *masveh* that is impenetrable except to love.

The Wall

WORSHIPERS AT the blank Wall believe that God returns their love somehow from beyond or inside. The Wall is a perfect physical embodiment of the sacred screen because there is no longer any Temple beyond or behind it.

A natural progression: the First Temple centered on the Holy of Holies, which held the ark of the covenant. That Temple was destroyed. When a Second Temple was built, the ark was gone and the Holy of Holies was an empty space. Then the Second Temple was destroyed. Today, Judaism's holiest site is a blank envelope with nothing—no temple—inside. We are left with only the veil as the eloquent outcome of two historical catastrophes.

A strange passage in the Talmud asserts that the volume of the Holy of Holies was undiminished when the ark stood inside. In other words, it was as if the ark were *always* not there, as if its disappearance had been mysteriously foreshadowed.

At the Wall, you see in concrete form how a veil can embody Judaism's highest truth. You see also that this blank is no cold abstraction; it draws Jews close. (After the Israelis recovered Old Jerusalem from the Jordanians in 1967, Rabbi A. I. Kook observed of the stones of the Wall, "There are men with hearts of stone, and stones with human hearts.") The literary critic George Steiner (among many others) has the idea that God's ineffable transcendence makes Judaism a deep and pure yet cold and difficult religion. He cites Arnold Schoenberg's libretto for his opera *Moses and Aaron*, in which Moses proclaims God "Inconceivable because invisible/ because immeasurable;/ because everlasting;/ because eternal;/ because omnipresent;/ because omnipotent." This supposed Mosaic view of God, Steiner writes, is "much more authentic, much deeper" than the concrete view held by Moses' brother Aaron. But unlike Aaron's view, Moses' is "accessible only to very few"; its "abstraction and inwardness" place it "beyond the power of ordinary men."

Which is intriguing, and exactly wrong. The very *masveh* that embodies God's inconceivable transcendence draws man and God close. The veil is impenetrable; but it is a bridal veil, a veil of love.

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The Shofar

AN ARTICULATE, musical people focuses its full attention on a sound with no words or melody. Sacred occasions culminate in wordless, tuneless wailing. Why?

The shofar plays an unusual role in the synagogue. It is not like a bell or bugle issuing a summons; not like a drum imposing order. The shofar's sound announces nothing. It is announced itself by a sung or spoken formula, and while its sound continues it is the only center of attention.

In nearly any synagogue, any sounding of the shofar is a moment of intense collective concentration. Here again (as in the raising-high of the Torah scroll that I discussed in Part 1), Judaism uses mere physical difficulty to make a spiritual point. The shofar can be a hard instrument to play. The difficulty of sounding it, and the fact that the instrumentalist sometimes fails, contribute to the intensity of the congregation's attention. The "energy curve" of the long New Year's morning prayers peaks during the shofar calls.

The shofar makes a direct appeal to God unburdened by words. It says something words cannot. Surely most practicing Jews would see the relationship between its sound and the end of *King Lear*, where Lear's loyally loving daughter Cordelia has been hanged and Lear's line is "Howl, howl, howl!" One of *King Lear*'s big topics is the outer bounds of language and the territory beyond. That territory is the shofar's territory.

The rabbis establish the character of the shofar sound in one of the most striking passages in the Talmud. What is the meaning, they ask, of the Hebrew word the Bible uses in connection with this sound? To explain, they cite the translation given by the classical Aramaic version of the Torah. And what does the Aramaic word mean? They cite another verse from the Aramaic translation, where the same word plainly describes a mother's mournful outcry as she looks out a window and grasps that her warrior son is dead and will never return. So we understand that the shofar's sound must be—is *intended* to be—a mournful outcry.

Amazingly, this biblical woman in mourning is the mother of Sisra—Sisra, a deadly enemy who "oppressed the children of Israel powerfully for twenty years," whose destruction was a joyful deliverance. His story appears in the book of Judges. Before facing the truth about his death, Sisra's mother (we read) had been musing wistfully about her son's presumed latest triumph; she had pictured him doling out the spoils, "a woman, two women for each man" (Judges 5:30). And yet, when Jews appeal to God using the shofar, they speak in *this* woman's voice—the voice of their bitter enemy's unrighteous mother who becomes, in her grief, merely a fellow human being. And when (according to a midrash) God hears the shofar, "He rises from the seat of justice, and sits on the throne of mercy."

Another midrash: when Israel communicates with God by means of the shofar, it is like two lovers "who do not want it to become known what one writes to the other, so they have a secret language." The shofar is the quintessential Jewish approach to God, a form of address that is beyond language—a veil like a blanket of snow that screens God from us and us from Him except for the hidden trickle beneath the snowcrust: of mercy, pity, love.

God's Name

GERSHOM SCHOLEM, the historian of Jewish mysticism, reports a "highly remarkable statement" by the 19th-century hasidic rabbi, Mendel of Rymanov: when God spoke to all Israel assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, the people heard only the first letter of the Ten Commandments—the letter *aleph*. Thereupon they were overwhelmed, and Moses stepped in as intermediary. What makes the statement "remarkable," according to Scholem, is that

> the consonant *aleph* represents nothing more than the position taken by the larynx when a word begins with a vowel. . . . To hear the *aleph* is to hear next to nothing. . . . Rabbi Mendel transformed the revelation on Mount Sinai into a mystical revelation, pregnant with infinite meaning, but without specific meaning.

In the voice of the shofar, man addresses God in a song without words, or beyond words; Rabbi Mendel understands the revelation at Sinai as the same kind of address, but from God to man. The shofar's voice is human-like but speaks no words. God's proper name once had a voice, but (just as the Holy of Holies has been emptied) the voice of God's name has been silenced.

The people hear God once, at Sinai, and resolve never to do it again: "Do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:16). Familiarity is the opposite of what they want: where God is concerned, not knowing can be better than knowing. God says: "I am Who I am." He says, "I will favor whom I will favor; I will pity whom I will pity" (Exodus 33:19). Moses tells the Lord: "They will say to me, what is His name?" God answers: "I am Who I am. . . . Say:

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'I am' sent me to you." Man is to know what God wants, not who God is.

And so when devout Jews see God's proper name, they say something different. They disregard the sounds (or voices) of the letters (in Hebrew, "sound" and "voice" are one word) *because* those letters spell the holiest word there is. They place the name outside the ordinary world of language—as the shofar's sound comes from outside, through a window on darkness. They screen it behind a featureless blank like the Western Wall (which is more powerful because there is no Temple behind it). They enclose it in a black box like a tefillin case. The talmudic sage Shimon ben Yochai held that all God's names—the tetragrammaton and all generic words for God—were *literally* enclosed within the ark of the covenant. Some opinions held that the ark's contents rested inside an ark inside an ark inside an ark: three layers of veil.

The Far Side of Meaning

SOME EMBODIMENTS of the *masveh* are physical: Moses' veil, the curtains before the holy ark in synagogue and the Holy of Holies in the Temple, mezuzah, tallis, tefillin, the Western Wall. And some are symbolic: the sound of the shofar, God's silent name. There is even a prescription for making the Torah itself the most important *masveh* of all—by dissolving its meaning.

The prescription comes from Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman—Nahmanides, the Ramban—born in the Catalonian town of Gerona in 1194. His formidable commentary brings the whole rabbinic tradition to bear on the Torah, word by word, in a hugely detailed discussion. (In modern Hebrew type, the Ramban's Torah commentary—albeit with heaps of editorial footnotes throughout—runs to a thousand-odd pages in two volumes.) Obviously his goal is to explain the meaning of those words—and yet, in the introduction to his commentary, he writes: "The whole entire Torah is names of the Holy One Blessed be He."

That is: if you pay no attention to the meanings of the words and change word-boundaries freely, sliding letters back and forth as if they were beads on an abacus, you can read the whole Torah as a string of names for God. This is a kabbalistic doctrine that also appears in the Zohar. It is a reading of Torah that sets its meaning to zero. It drains all the meaning out of the words as deliberately as you might pull the plug in a basin of water.

The Ramban gives us an actual method for not understanding—a way to "reset to zero" the plain sense of the sacred text, to flatten it so that every word means the same thing, keeping the letters but erasing the sense, turning the text into a great featureless sandflat where all you can hear is God and God and God. But he himself wrote a thousand pages to explain these same words. What drove him to press on past understanding?

And not understanding is certainly *harder* than understanding. Every child learns his native language; it is nearly impossible to unlearn a language you know and hear its words as meaningless sounds. The great 20th-century artist Alberto Giacometti once described, as a central event in his life, a moment at which the people around him suddenly stopped seeming like people and turned into mere unrecognizable objects. Only then, when these most familiar of all objects became strange, was he able to see and understand them properly for the first time.

To "achieve meaninglessness" seems like a negative goal; it comes about not because of any desire to subtract from the text of the Torah but because there is more to the text than just its meaning. The extra ingredient is holiness. You can see this better when you blank out the meaning—as you can see the sun's corona when a solar eclipse blanks out the main disk.

Of course there is no value to meaninglessness *per se*, or to meaninglessness in some random text. But the Torah is no random text. Each generation has been told by the previous one that these are God's words. The chain of tradition—a chain of voices, of parental murmurings—connects us directly to Sinai. Not only that, but God gave the Torah "potential holiness," gave Israel the opportunity to *make* the Torah holy. (Thus the great talmudist Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik: "Holiness is created by man, by flesh and blood.") And Israel responded. Thousands of years of love and devotion have made the Torah a radiant body. You see and feel this radiance best when you have dimmed the glare of meaning.

Jews have loved the words of Torah for a long time—not just the words but the letters, their exact shapes. These letters *are*, collectively, a beloved face. Faces don't "mean" anything.

By reading Torah in a way that blanks out the meaning, the Ramban associates himself with the most esoteric type of mysticism—but he also makes the plainest, simplest kind of claim. He acknowledges that the face of Torah is holy for its own sake. And so Jews want to understand their sacred texts but also to nullify their meanings; to pass through meaning and come out the far side.

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The Sound of the Screen

THE *masveh* resounds like an all-pervading wind throughout the city of Judaism. In studying conflicting opinions in the Talmud, the rule is: these *and* those are words of the living God. The Talmud is built out of argument and controversy. Of the 523 chapters in the Mishnah, only six contain no disputed points. Although most disputes in the Babylonian Talmud are resolved, over 300 are not. And among the resolved disputes, almost all views (accepted and rejected) are preserved, and Jews are required to study them all. We need to make choices and practical decisions; but what do we know in the end about God's will?

The whole sacred literature of Judaism is full of arguing voices, contradictory opinions abolishing each other like waves approaching from opposite directions, where one wave's crest meets the other's trough. A yeshiva where the Talmud is studied today is full of those same voices—discussing, arguing, and explaining in the characteristic yeshiva chant. The Talmud has always been studied aloud, and chanted. The text has no punctuation; the chant takes the place of punctuation, and clarifies the structure of the unfolding argument. Anyone who has ever heard the "Four Questions" sung in traditional style at a Passover seder knows the talmudic chant's character.

You can be part of a discussion or a dispute. Or you can sit back, close your eyes, and let the arguing and counter-arguing wash over you. But this seemingly meaningless sound is the farthest thing from mere noise; it is built of meaning, it presupposes understanding, but it goes further. It is the nearest Jews get to hearing transcendence, or seeing its glimmer under the door. God's transcendent presence leaves a murmur of sanctity in the universe.

When someone dies and we say the memorial prayer, "Lord full of mercy," another of those simple but fathomless phrases occurs on which Judaism turns, which capture the pure pitches of the universe. We ask God to grant to the departed "perfect peace *tahat kanfei ha-shekhinah*," beneath the wings of God's presence. The phrase recalls the cherubim's wings screening the ark of the covenant, the curtains screening the Holy of Holies, God's own hand protecting Moses. Judaism has developed many doctrines about death over the millennia, but the simplest and deepest is this: that the dead are beyond the *masveh*, which is opaque, absolute, and impenetrable except to love. In seeking God, we cross the dark wood of our own selves.

The Presence of Holiness

THE IDEA of God's transcendence is part of the Bible. It was developed formally by the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo at the beginning of the first century C.E. Daniel Matt traces this concept of "the unknowability and indescribability of God" from Philo through Maimonides in the 12th century, from early mysticism through classic Kabbalah into Hasidism. But if you are looking for the clearest embodiment of the veil, of *intimacy* with the ineffable, you will find it not in hasidic philosophy but in hasidic practice.

On Saturday evenings hasidic communities, gathered in their study-and-prayer houses, often push past the end of the Sabbath into a ritual called *melaveh malkah*—accompanying the departing Sabbath queen. Singing goes on into the night, and at first the songs have words. But after a while the singers often shake the words off and continue in meaningless syllables. They want to pass through meaning and come out the far side, as they have passed through nightfall and the end of the Sabbath and emerged not into the next week but into a state of suspension whose exact location on the map of ritual time is unclear—like the narrow strip between the two screening curtains of the Holy of Holies, which might or might not have been part of the inner sanctum. Singing in a dark room, they are back in the cave where Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai passed thirteen years in hiding from the Romans; where the imagination soars unthinkably.

If they can understand but transcend the meaning of their holy books and emerge on the far side, they will come face to face, *panim el panim*, with the actual face of Torah (not the words but their shapes) and the actual voice of Torah (not the words but their sounds), and this face and voice which they love, not for its meaning but for itself, as you love a man or woman, this face and voice of Torah are the beloved face and voice of the Jewish people—*amkha*, they call it, *Your* people—of the mothers and martyrs, heroes and fathers, scholars and children; and of their own departed.

In Judaism we seek not the mere meaning but the actual face and voice of Torah as we seek the unveiled face and voice of our dearest love. "Let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is beautiful" (Song of Songs 2:14).

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Victory for Vouchers?

Paul E. Peterson

In the most anticipated decision of its recent term, the Supreme Court ruled, in the case of *Zelman* v. *Simmons-Harris*, that the school-voucher program in Cleveland, Ohio did not violate the Constitution's ban on the "establishment" of religion. Opponents of vouchers—i.e., the use of public funds to help families pay tuition at private schools, including religious schools—were predictably disappointed, but pledged to fight on. As Senator Edward M. Kennedy declared, "Vouchers may be constitutional," but "that doesn't make them good policy."

The policy's sympathizers, needless to say, saw the ruling in a different light. President Bush used the occasion of the Supreme Court's decision to issue a full-throated endorsement of vouchers. *Zelman*, he told a gathering in Cleveland, did more than remove a constitutional cloud; it was a "historic" turning point in how Americans think about education. In 1954, in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the Court had ruled that the country could not have two sets of schools, "one for African-Americans and one for whites." Now, he continued, in ruling as it did in the Cleveland case, the Court was affirming a similar principle, proclaiming that "our nation will not accept one education system for those who can afford to send their children to a school of their choice and one for those who can't." *Zelman*, according to the President, is *Brown* all over again.

But is it?

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Publicly funded school vouchers got their start in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1990. Established at the urging of local black leaders and Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson (now the Secretary of Health and Human Services), the program was originally restricted to secular private schools and included fewer than a thousand needy students. To accommodate growing demand, religious schools were later allowed to participate, an arrangement declared constitutional in 1998 by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The Milwaukee program now provides a voucher worth up to $5,785 to over 10,000 students, amounting to more than 15 percent of the school system's eligible population.

In 1999, at the behest of Governor Jeb Bush, Florida also established a publicly funded voucher program, aimed at students attending public schools that failed to meet state standards. Though just two schools and fewer than a hundred students have participated in the program thus far, ten other schools, with thousands of students, will be eligible to participate this fall. (The Florida program is also noteworthy because it served as a model for the voucher-like federal scholarship program advocated by George W. Bush during the 2000 presidential cam-

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paign—a program subsequently abandoned by the administration in its push for an education bill.)

Though the Milwaukee and Florida programs had until recently received the most public attention, it was the program in Cleveland—the country's only other publicly funded voucher program of any size*—that won the opponents of vouchers their day before the Supreme Court. The Cleveland program is relatively small, providing a maximum of $2,250 a year to each of roughly 4,000 students. Parents use the vouchers overwhelmingly for religious schools, which in recent years have enrolled over 90 percent of the program's participants. This, according to lawyers for the teachers' unions, the most powerful foe of vouchers, constituted an obvious violation of the separation between church and state. And they prevailed twice in federal court, winning decisions at the trial and appellate level against Susan Zelman, Ohio's superintendent of public instruction and the official responsible for administering the Cleveland program.

But the five more conservative members of the Supreme Court were not persuaded. In his opinion for the majority in *Zelman*, Chief Justice William Rehnquist pointed to three well-known precedents—*Mueller* (1983), *Witters* (1986), and *Zobrest* (1993)—in which the Court had allowed government funds to flow to religious schools. What these cases had in common, he wrote, and what they shared with the Cleveland voucher program, was that public money reached the schools "only as a result of the genuine and independent choices of private individuals." Under Cleveland's program, families were in no way coerced to send their children to religious schools; they had a range of state-funded options, including secular private schools, charter schools, magnet schools, and traditional public schools. Considered in this wider context, the voucher program was, Rehnquist concluded, "entirely neutral with respect to religion."

The dissenters in *Zelman*, led by Justice David Souter, challenged the majority's reading of the relevant precedents—especially of *Nyquist* (1973), a ruling that struck down a New York State program giving aid to religious schools—and suggested that the choice in Cleveland between religion and non-religion was a mere legal fiction. They saved their most pointed objections, however, for what they saw as the likely social consequences of the ruling. The Court, Souter wrote, was promoting "divisiveness" by asking secular taxpayers to support, for example, the teaching of "Muslim views on the differential treatment of the sexes," or by asking Muslim-Americans to pay "for the endorsement of the religious Zionism taught in many religious Jewish schools." Justice Stephen Breyer suggested that the decision would spark "a struggle of sect against sect," and Justice John Paul Stevens wondered if the majority had considered the lessons of other nations' experience around the world, including "the impact of religious strife . . . on the decisions of neighbors in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East to mistrust one another."

IF JUDICIAL rhetoric is all that counts, the dissenters in *Zelman* had the better of it. In the majority opinion, by contrast, there is very little that rises to the level of *Brown*'s often-cited language about the demands of American equality. Even observers pleased by the ruling were disappointed that the majority's opinion did not go much beyond showing how the facts of the case fit past precedents; no ringing declarations are to be found in Chief Justice Rehnquist's cautious prose.

Only in the concurrences written by two of the Justices does one get a sense of the wider issues at stake. Responding to the worries of the dissenters, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor pointed out that taxpayer dollars have long flowed to various religious institutions—through Pell Grants to denominational colleges and universities; through child-care subsidies that can be used at churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions; through direct aid to parochial schools for transportation, textbooks, and other materials; and, indirectly, through the tax code, which gives special breaks to the faithful. If government aid to religious institutions were such a problem, she suggested, wouldn't American society be torn already by sectarian strife?

What Justice O'Connor failed to answer was the dissenters' obvious disquiet—one shared these days by many Americans—at the prospect of public money going to support the teaching of extremist religious creeds. This is a reasonable concern—though it is hardly clear, as the Justices themselves might have argued, that the best tool for conquering intolerance born of religious zeal is for the government to impose secular enlightenment. The U.S. has achieved religious peace not by depending upon school-based indoctrination of any stripe but by ensuring that the members of all creeds have access to the democratic process and a robust private sphere in which to meet their particular needs.

As an educational matter, several well-designed studies have shown that students who attend pri-

* New York City, Washington, D.C., and numerous other cities have well-developed *private* voucher programs designed to help low-income families; these currently serve over 50,000 students.

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vate schools in the U.S. are not only just as tolerant of others as their public-school peers but are also *more* engaged in political and community life. Catholic schools have a particularly outstanding record, probably because for more than a century American Catholics have felt compelled to teach democratic values as proof of their patriotism. There are obviously extremist outliers among, for instance, some of the American *madrassas* discovered by journalists since September 11, but there is no reason to doubt that most of the country's religious schools are attempting to prove that they, too, can create good citizens.

As for *Brown* itself, only Justice Clarence Thomas, in his own stirring concurrence, pointed to it as an explicit precedent, quoting Frederick Douglass to argue that today's inner-city public-school systems "deny emancipation to urban minority students." As he observed,

> The failure to provide education to poor urban children perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty, dependence, criminality, and alienation that continues for the remainder of their lives. If society cannot end racial discrimination, at least it can arm minorities with the education to defend themselves from some of discrimination's effects.

For Justice Thomas—as for President Bush, whose own remarks were undoubtedly influenced by these passages—vouchers are a civil-rights issue; they promise not to intensify religious strife, as the Court's dissenters would have it, but to help heal the country's most enduring social divide.

WHETHER *Zelman* can in fact meet these high expectations remains very much to be seen. *Brown*, in principle, was self-enacting. Neither state legislatures nor local school boards could defy the ruling without running afoul of the law. George Wallace, Bull Connor, and many other Southern politicians were willing to do just that, but in the end, federal authorities imposed the Supreme Court's decision on the vested interests that opposed it.

Zelman is different. Though it keeps existing voucher programs intact, it does not compel the formation of new ones. Here the barricades to change remain extraordinarily high.

Public opinion does not pose the most serious obstacle; indeed, on this issue it is highly uncertain. Pollsters can get either pro-voucher or anti-voucher majorities simply by tinkering with the wording of their questions and the order in which they are asked. Nor, despite greater exposure for the issue, have the public's views evolved much in recent years; questions asked in 1996 generated basically the same results in 2001.

Vouchers suffer from graver problems among members of the political class. Whether in Congress or at the state level, substantial bipartisan support is usually necessary to get a piece of legislation through the various committees, past a vote in two chambers, and signed into law. For vouchers, such support has never materialized. Whatever the private opinions of Democrats, for most of them, it is political suicide to support vouchers publicly. Teachers' unions have long placed vouchers at the top of their legislative kill list, and they are a key Democratic constituency, providing the party with both substantial financing and election-day shock troops.

Nor can voucher proponents rely on wholehearted support from the GOP. Most Republicans, especially social conservatives and libertarians who have read their Milton Friedman, support vouchers in principle. Still, an idea whose primary appeal is to black Americans, the most faithful of all Democratic voting blocs, is a hard sell among the Republican rank-and-file. Vouchers simply do not have much resonance with well-heeled suburbanites who already have a range of educational choices. When vouchers came up as state ballot questions in both California and Michigan two years ago, most Republican politicians found a way to dodge the issue—and the proposals lost badly.

Even if this political situation were to change, most states have constitutional restrictions of their own that may be invoked to scuttle attempts to provide vouchers for use at religious schools. Many of these provisions are so-called "Blaine" amendments, dating to the 19th century, when James Blaine, a Senator from Maine and a Republican presidential candidate, sought to win the anti-immigrant vote by campaigning to deny public funds to Catholic schools. (Blaine is perhaps most famous for describing the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion.") In its classic version, the Blaine amendment read as follows:

> No money raised by taxation for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefore, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations.

In a number of cases, state courts have interpret-

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ed Blaine amendments to mean nothing more than what is required, according to the Supreme Court, by the establishment clause of the First Amendment. On this view, vouchers are safe—but not every state judge necessarily shares this view. Such language may prove to be a hurdle for the voucher program in Florida, where a trial court has now ruled that the law violates the state constitution. Depending on what finally happens at the state level, the Supreme Court may in time be asked to decide whether, on account of their nativist and anti-Catholic origins, the Blaine amendments themselves are unconstitutional.

HOWEVER MUCH these practical differences may separate *Zelman* from *Brown*, one powerful similarity remains: like the Court's famed ruling against segregation in the schools, the decision to allow vouchers means much more for black students and their families than for other Americans.

For decades, and despite a host of compensatory reforms, the sizable gap in educational performance between blacks and whites has remained roughly the same. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, black eighth graders continue to score about four grade levels below their white peers on standardized tests. Nor is this gap likely to close as long as we have, in President Bush's words, "one education system for those who can afford to send their children to a school of their choice and one for those who can't."

When parents choose a neighborhood or town in which to live, they also select, often quite self-consciously, a school for their children. That is why various Internet services now provide buyers—and real-estate agents—with detailed test-score data and other information about school districts and even individual schools. But there is a catch: the mobility that makes these choices possible costs money. It is no accident that children lucky enough to be born into privilege also attend the nation's best schools.

African-Americans are often the losers in this arrangement. Holding less financial equity, and still facing discrimination in the housing market, they choose from a limited set of housing options. As a result, their children are more likely to attend the worst public schools. Richer, whiter districts rarely extend anything more than a few token slots to low-income minority students outside their communities.

It is thus unsurprising that blacks have benefited most when school choice has been expanded. In multi-year evaluations of private voucher programs in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio, my colleagues and I found that African-American students, when given the chance to attend private schools, scored significantly higher on standardized tests than comparable students who remained in the public schools. In New York, where the estimates are most precise, those who switched from public to private schools scored, after three years, roughly 9 percentage points higher on math and reading tests than their public-school peers, a difference of about two grade levels. If reproduced nationwide, this result would cut almost in half the black-white test-score gap. (Interestingly, there is no evidence that vouchers have improved the academic performance of students from other ethnic groups. In my own research, they had no impact, positive or negative, on the test scores of either whites in Dayton or Hispanics in New York City.)

These findings about the especially positive effects of private schools on African-American students are hardly isolated. One review of the literature, conducted by the Princeton economist Cecilia Rouse, concludes that even though (once again) it is difficult to discern positive benefits for white students, "Catholic schools generate higher test scores for African-Americans." Another, done by Jeffrey Grogger and Derek Neal, economists from the University of Wisconsin and the University of Chicago, finds little in the way of detectable gains for whites but concludes that "urban minorities in Catholic schools fare much better than similar students in public schools."

No less important, in light of concerns about the effect of vouchers on students "left behind," is that school choice also seems to improve the performance of students who remain in the *public* schools. The best data from Milwaukee show strong advances in test scores since the voucher program was put into place there ten years ago, especially at public schools in those low-income neighborhoods where the voucher option was available. As observers in Milwaukee have noted, it was only in the wake of the voucher program's expansion that the public-school system there began to adopt a series of apparently successful reforms.

We do not know precisely what accounts for the gains that black students have made by switching to private schools. The answer is certainly not money, since the private schools they attend are usually low-budget, no-frills operations. The most striking difference, according to my own research, lies in the general educational environment: the parents of these students have reported being much more satisfied with everything from the curricu-

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lum, homework, and teacher quality to how the schools communicate with the parents themselves. The classes tend to be smaller, they say, and there is less fighting, cheating, racial conflict, or destruction of property.

THAT VOUCHERS can produce such results has been known for some time. The question now is whether the ruling in *Zelman* will have any impact on what the public and politicians think about the issue. If nothing else, the Court's authoritative pronouncement on the constitutionality of vouchers has already conferred new legitimacy on them. Newspaper editors and talk-show hosts have been forced to give the idea more respect, and political opponents cannot dismiss it so easily.

Still, the key to change lies within the black community, and especially with parents, who increasingly know that private schools provide a better education for their children. A 1998 poll by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan research group, found that 72 percent of African-American parents supported vouchers, as opposed to just 59 percent of white parents. A poll conducted two years later by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies had similar results, with just under half of the overall adult population supporting vouchers but 57 percent of African-American adults favoring the idea. Perhaps more to the point, blacks constituted nearly half of all the applicants for the 40,000 privately funded vouchers offered nationwide by the Children's Scholarship Fund in 1999, even though they comprised only about a quarter of the eligible population.

Even in the face of such numbers, it is too much to expect that men like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton will reconsider their virulent opposition to vouchers; their political tendencies are too well defined. But pressure to support school vouchers is building among black parents, and black leaders will have to act. Howard Fuller, the former superintendent of Milwaukee's public-school system, has formed the Black Alliance for Educational Options, a pro-voucher group that has mounted an effective public-relations campaign and is making waves in civil-rights circles. And young politicians like Cory Booker in Newark have begun to challenge their old-line, machine-style elders, using vouchers as a key dividing point. Responding to these currents—and to the decision in *Zelman*—the city council of Camden, composed entirely of black and Hispanic Democrats, passed a unanimous resolution in July urging the state of New Jersey to establish a voucher program for the city's dysfunctional public schools. Such examples are sure to multiply.

Not even the Supreme Court, it should be recognized, can make educational change come quickly in America. Though *Brown* was handed down in 1954, it took more than a decade before major civil-rights legislation was enacted; Southern schools were not substantially desegregated until the 1970's. Anyone writing about *Brown* ten years after its passage might have concluded that the decision was almost meaningless.

The same may be said about *Zelman* on its tenth anniversary. Perhaps the safest prediction is that, in four or five decades, American education will have been altered dramatically, in ways we cannot anticipate, by the parental demand for greater choice—a demand codified in *Zelman*. Many battles will be fought and lost along the way, to be sure, but the victories will accumulate, because choice, once won, is seldom conceded.

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OBSERVATIONS

The Mau-Mauing of Bjørn Lomborg

David Schoenbrod

THE POWER of the environmentalist movement rests on many factors, from widespread (and often misplaced) fears about pollution to the wholly laudable conservationist instincts of ordinary people. But the *authority* of the movement rests above all on its claim to speak for, and in the name of, science.

That claim was first advanced in 1962 by Rachel Carson, who argued in *Silent Spring* that the only way to avoid catastrophe was by taking the issue of environmental protection out of the hands of elected representatives and empowering scientists to formulate a response to the dangers that science itself had foreseen. Today, no fewer than 18,000 officials inside the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), established in 1970, run the national government's most powerful regulatory regime in the name of science, while a host of environmentalist organizations raise the banner of science to silence outside critics and skeptical legislators alike. Such is the intimidating force of that banner that, in the face of it, the Bush administration has backed down on a number of major environmental issues even at the cost of disappointing some of its key backers.

That is why it was newsworthy when a book appeared last year that dared to take on, head first, precisely the claim of the environmental movement to speak for science. The title of the book was *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World*,* and the reaction it elicited from the movement and its defenders tells us much about one of the most entrenched orthodoxies of our age.

THE BOOK'S author, Bjørn Lomborg, is a Danish professor of statistics in his mid-thirties who was once a Greenpeace activist and who still thinks of himself as a dedicated environmentalist. His twin interests, in statistics and the environment, came into alignment when he was provoked into investigating the veracity of a statement by the late American economist Julian Simon. According to Simon—who was also an inveterate gadfly of orthodox environmentalists—the statistical record failed spectacularly to bear out the popular notion that we were in imminent danger of environmental ruin. Lomborg, together with a group of his brightest students, set out to prove Simon wrong. In the event, however, he found him largely right. *The Skeptical Environmentalist* marshals a formidable array of evidence to demonstrate why.

The book begins by describing the contemporary conventional wisdom about the state of the environment as gleaned from newspapers, magazines, and school curricula. Typical is this, from a children's book published by Oxford University Press: "[T]he balance of nature is delicate but essential for life. Humans have upset that balance, stripping the land of its green cover, choking the air, and poisoning the seas." *The Skeptical Environmentalist* then goes on to compare such standard fare, which Lomborg dubs the "environmental litany," with what

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* Cambridge University Press, 496 pp., $27.95 (paper). See the review by Kevin Shapiro in the November 2001 COMMENTARY.

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we can learn from science itself, which turns out to be something altogether different. Over the course of some 500 closely argued pages, and with the aid of 2,930 footnotes, Lomborg shows with relentless thoroughness how environmental activists have fed the public an unending pack of what Huck Finn delicately termed "stretchers."

Some examples:

- While we have been assured that air pollution is a modern plague, air quality in major cities in developed countries is actually much cleaner than it was 50 or 100 years ago. London's air is cleaner than at any time over at least the last 400 years.
- While we have been warned that human population is surging ever upward to a point that will guarantee mass starvation, the world's population growth will actually level off by 2200.
- While we have been informed that our forests and lungs are being decimated by acid rain, the most authoritative study of the matter shows little if any damage to trees in North America.

Lomborg hardly asserts that the environment is in perfect shape. He notes, for example, that even despite vast improvements in the quality of the air, pollution in developed countries still does some harm to health. He also owns that a couple of problems are getting worse—specifically, we are losing species, and we are warming the earth—but he accuses environmentalists of exaggerating both of these problems wildly.

Thus, on the issue of species extinction, activists regularly cite predictions that the earth will lose anywhere from 25 to almost 100 percent of its species by the end of the 21st century. But, Lomborg points out, most mainstream scientific estimates of species loss actually run much lower, on the order of 0.7 percent over the next 50 years: "not a catastrophe, but a problem—one of many that mankind still needs to solve."

This distinction between a problem and a catastrophe is critical to the psychology of the environmental movement. A problem presents us with choices about its priority in relation to other problems; a looming catastrophe impels us to do whatever the "experts" tell us we must do to avert it. That has particular relevance to the second issue, global warming. For if, as we are constantly being told, global warming is indeed a looming catastrophe, then it follows we must do everything we can to slow it down; and the way to do *that* (say the "experts") is by ratifying and enforcing the severe measures contained in the Kyoto Protocol.

Lomborg demurs, on the ground that global warming, while a problem, is only a problem. For one thing, he reminds us, the actual degree of global warming over the next century may be rather insignificant: projections by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) range from a relatively manageable 1.4 to an admittedly alarming 5.8 degrees centigrade. The fact that leading organs of the press have predictably ignored the lower figure and reported only the higher does not oblige the rest of us to reach for the panic button.

Moreover, Lomborg shows, the IPCC has resolved uncertainties in its climatological models in ways that maximize the amount of the projected increase. And even if one were to posit the reliability of those models, the IPCC's predictions of future carbon-dioxide emissions, which critically affect its most alarming predictions of temperature increases, are also too high, being based on the unwarranted assumption that the price of solar power and other alternatives to fossil fuels will drop much more slowly than it has been doing; in fact, by 2050 these alternatives will enjoy a price advantage for many uses, and emissions of carbon dioxide will be on the wane.

The upshot, in Lomborg's judgment, is that by century's end, temperatures are likely to have increased by at most 1.5 degrees and thereafter to go down. But, he adds, suppose he is wrong about all this and the IPCC is correct in projecting higher temperatures; *even so*, the result "will not decrease food production, . . . probably not increase storminess or the frequency of hurricanes, [and] not increase the impact of malaria or indeed cause more deaths." And in the meantime, what will we have accomplished by adopting Kyoto with its draconian measures? If faithfully implemented by each of its signatories, this agreement would end up costing "at least $150 billion dollars a year and probably much more," and it would succeed in delaying the IPCC's projected warming by—six years. According to Lomborg's calculations, the cost of Kyoto *for one year alone* would pay for eliminating the unsanitary drinking water that now kills two million people every year. From the point of view of human welfare, is this not a far better way to spend the money?

LOMBORG'S BOOK was published in August 2001, and it attracted a very great deal of attention in the general press, much of it favorable. But the attack came hot and quick. That activists should have been furious at *The Skeptical Environmentalist* was to be expected; more surprising, at least on the surface, was the wildly intemperate response of the key scientific journals. The reviewers for *Nature*, the most prestigious of the natural-science magazines, went so far as to relegate Lomborg to the class of "those who . . . argue that gay men aren't dying of AIDS, that Jews weren't singled out by the Nazis for extermination, and so on." *Scientific American*, in its January 2002 issue, published a scathing anti-Lomborg editorial, and followed it up in the same issue with no fewer

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than four equally scathing notices by individual scientists. In *Science*, a review of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* bore the derisive title, "Manna from Heaven."

Not content with attacking the book, the established journals then blocked any ripostes. Here *Nature* proved something of an exception, publishing a letter from its former Washington editor asserting that the attacks on Lomborg "exemplif[ied] the unfortunate tendency of some environmental activists, when challenged with well-founded objections to the scientific viability of their alarmist claims about the state of the planet, to respond with diversionary tactics." But *Science* and *Scientific American* circled the wagons. *Science* refused to publish any replies to its attack, not even a brief letter from Lomborg himself, and *Scientific American* mounted a defense in depth.

Upon first learning of that venerable magazine's intentions for its January 2002 issue, Lomborg had contacted the editor-in-chief, John Rennie, asking for permission to respond in the same issue. Rennie put him off for a half-year, finally allotting him space in May. In the meantime, Lomborg posted a response on his own website, in which he reproduced *Scientific American*'s attack and commented on it paragraph by paragraph. The reaction of the magazine was to demand that he remove this "dialogue" from the Internet or be sued for infringement of copyright.

Lomborg then suggested that the magazine transfer the dialogue to its own website. But this, too, it declined to do, and after more threats Lomborg removed his response. In the end, *Scientific American* did post his response, but only after it had prepared a lengthy rebuttal to it—which Lomborg again asked permission to reproduce so that he could respond to *it* point by point; again he was warned off.

Whatever else one may say about this exercise, it was the very opposite of the free give-and-take that is supposed to characterize responsible scientific discourse.

WHAT, THEN, were the actual criticisms leveled at *The Skeptical Environmentalist*? These ranged widely. It was asserted, for example, that as a statistician rather than an earth scientist, Lomborg lacked the necessary credentials even to address the issues on which he had presumed to pass judgment. In a related charge, his publisher, Cambridge University Press, was accused of perpetrating a fraud by having allegedly neglected to get the book reviewed by earth scientists prior to acceptance. Lomborg's work was also pilloried for relying heavily on secondary sources rather than on a thorough scrutiny of original research. His attacks, it was said, were misdirected: no responsible scientists actually espoused the doomsday scenarios he attributed to them. Finally, and most crucially, he was said to be simply wrong or, at best, misleading as to the facts themselves.

One can pass over some of these charges summarily. The idea that Lomborg had no standing because, in the words of one of his attackers, he was not "an expert as regards environmental problems," was exceedingly strange coming from scientists, a class of humans who supposedly pride themselves on valuing the truth over mere credentials, on judging the message rather than the messenger. In any event, Lomborg is no lesser an expert in his specialty than his critics are in theirs, and his specialty happens to be one of the dozens, from atmospheric physics to zoology, that are relevant to measuring the real state of the world. The only point legitimately at issue is whether he properly employed the data in appraising the assertions of the environmental movement.

As for the attack on Cambridge University Press, it was simply dishonorable, not to say McCarthyite. One prominent scientist called upon Cambridge to fire the editor responsible for Lomborg's book, while others suggested that henceforth the press itself should be shunned by all right-thinking scientists. The past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the organization that publishes *Science*, wondered aloud how Cambridge "could have published a book that so clearly could never have passed peer review." As it happens, however, the manuscript had indeed been submitted to (in the words of its editor) four "senior figures . . . from leading departments on both sides of the Atlantic," including three earth scientists and one social scientist, all of whom recommended it for publication.

No less unfounded was the complaint that Lomborg relied too heavily on secondary scientific sources, as well as—horrors—journalistic ones ("like bad term papers," sniffed a critic in *Nature*). It is true that about 5 percent of the citations in Lomborg's footnotes are to journalistic sources; these quite properly document the standard "environmental litany" that is fed to the public. When it comes to the citation of scientific sources, what is important to understand is that primary sources usually address extremely specific issues—for example, the impact of a given type of acid rain on a given kind of tree. It is to secondary sources that one typically turns for a synthesis of primary studies for the purpose of addressing broader issues—for example, the impact of all kinds of acid rain on forests. Thus, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change draws upon hundreds of primary sources to produce its reports on global warming. Lomborg frequently cites these reports—*and so do his critics*, who also routinely laud them as authoritative.

Have eminent scientists ceased to utter prophecies of doom? Here, Lomborg's critics had a point, but a small one. Most scientists do now refrain from making wild predic-

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tions; those cited by Lomborg to the effect that we will soon lose from 25 to almost 100 percent of the world's species came in the past. Nevertheless, such predictions, loudly promulgated by the environmental movement and its favorite journalists, keep circulating and are widely accepted as the truth—which was exactly Lomborg's point. Moreover, *few if any* are the scientists who have troubled to stand up to repudiate them.

Finally, did Lomborg get the scientific facts wrong? Was he guilty, as *Scientific American* charged, of a "misunderstanding of the underlying science," of "numerous errors," and of writing a book "rife with careless mistakes"?

In its eleven-page attack, *Scientific American* itself came up with a total of only nine claimed factual errors in *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, and seven of these melt away upon inspection. In three of them, Lomborg was accused of having overlooked fundamental points that (he has persuasively shown) he not only did not overlook but explicitly recognized and discussed. In the case of three more, his attackers quoted him out of context and distorted the plain meaning of his words. One purported "error" involved not facts but a disagreement over policy. In the remaining two instances, *Scientific American* did manage to identify real errors, but wholly trivial ones—i.e., Lomborg's statement that nuclear energy constitutes 20 percent of energy production in countries with nuclear power (the phrase should have read, 20 percent of *electricity* production) and his one-time use of the word "catalyzing" instead of "electrolyzing."

Trivial as these mistakes were, they were also immaterial to Lomborg's conclusions, and cast no shadow on the credibility of his book as a whole, which is remarkably *free* of factual errors. (Lomborg himself has posted a list of such errors on his website, www.lomborg.com.) *Scientific American* actually committed more mistakes in its eleven-page attack than it was able to identify in Lomborg's 500-page book. Indeed, the paucity of outright errors in *The Skeptical Environmentalist* is what forced Lomborg's critics to adopt another, secondary line of attack against it, claiming not so much that he had gotten his facts wrong as that he framed them—well, inappropriately.

Take, again, the issue of species extinction. Most mainstream projections, as Lomborg pointed out, now suggest that we will lose only 0.7 percent of the world's species over the next 50 years. That may be the case, *Scientific American* grudgingly conceded; but what Lomborg *should* have reported was that the present extinction rate is 1,000 times higher than the "normal" rate.

Should he have reported this? If the issue is how best to frame the facts for the purposes of making policy choices, I would contend that *Scientific American*'s way is, to say the least, not very helpful. By the "normal" extinction rate, the magazine appeared to mean the rate at which extinctions would take place *if there were no people on earth*. Surely this is a bizarre framework in which to think about the issue—unless one is determined to push the radical agenda of the environmentalist movement and is concerned about rousing public support for it.

That, indeed, would appear to be the concern of *Scientific American*. As its editor in chief candidly put it, a

> public that knows [that] action would cut the extinction rate from 1,000 times the background level to only 500 times could find reasonable motivation to act. A public hearing that extinction rates would drop from 0.7 percent per 50 years to 0.35 percent might wonder why it should bother.

Exactly so. Of course, *Scientific American* is free to "frame" the facts as it will. But it is hardly in a position to accuse Lomborg of bad science if he frames them differently.

NONE OF this is to say that Lomborg's book is beyond criticism, or that his own formulations could not have been improved upon at points. In contending, for example, that the earth has plenty of unused arable land to meet projected population growth, he should have acknowledged that little of this land is in countries likely to experience the highest growth, and that those countries are likely to undergo massive dislocations, if not wars and famines. Overall, however, Lomborg's command of the facts is impressive indeed, and his method of argumentation, unlike that of his critics, is both cogent and fair.

The key point, however, is not who scored more points in debate. The key point has to do with the reception awaiting anyone who challenges the environmental litany. At the top of the editor-in-chief's statement in the January 2002 *Scientific American*, there appeared the following caption: "Science defends itself against *The Skeptical Environmentalist*." But "science" was not Lomborg's target, and "science" should have had no need to defend itself against him. In choosing to treat *The Skeptical Environmentalist* as an attack on environmental science, Lomborg's scientific critics inadvertently revealed the degree of their own complicity with the misrepresentations and propagandistic distortions he so skillfully exposed. If they had used a tenth of the energy they expended on him to refute the pseudo-science of their environmentalist allies, Lomborg would have had less reason to write his book in the first place.

But this also brings us to the broader issue of which the Lomborg story is a symptom. Even as Cambridge University Press was being threatened with a boycott, an editor at another prestigious house was being similarly menaced. There, a proposal had come in for an anthology of essays designed to expose undergraduates to diverse perspectives in environmental studies. Asked to

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comment on the proposal, one prominent scientist responded to the editor as follows:

> The anthology contains a paper by Julian Simon and Aaron Wildavsky. Publish that [and] you'll never get me to review anything for you ever again, recommend any author to you, or buy any of your press books. I didn't get beyond that entry, but were the anthology to contain anything I have written . . . I must inform you that I will not be giving the author's permission.
>
> If you want to maintain a scholarly reputation you do not publish trash.

The reviewer then passed on his missive, which soon received wide circulation. To appreciate the viciousness of his tone, it is only necessary to know that the co-author of the "trash" to which he referred was the same Julian Simon whom Lomborg initially set out to refute and ended up confirming.

In short, what we are dealing with here are issues not of science but of power—and, it would seem, power embattled.

THE RELEASE of Lomborg's book last fall was attended (as I have already noted) by a great deal of publicity all over the world, and the book itself immediately garnered respectful notices in places like the *Washington Post* and the *Economist*. This positive reception challenged the power of the environmental movement at a pivotal point: its claim to represent scientific truth. Lomborg may not have been the first to threaten this power, but he was far and away the most dangerous.

A recent article by Roger Pielke, Jr. (in, to its credit, *Nature*) helps explain why. Writing about the making of environmental policy, Pielke identifies what he calls an "'iron triangle' of mutually reinforcing interests": politicians, scientists, and environmental activists. According to Pielke, politicians are loathe to make controversial decisions on environmental issues and so pass the buck to "science." The scientists are happy to be given the power, not to mention the research grants that come along with it. The environmentalists lean on the scientists for justification of their policy agenda. Each leg of the triad depends on the others for support.

I would add to Pielke's triad a fourth element: the staffs of federal agencies, like the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, that fund research. These agencies can grow their budgets by presenting issues within their jurisdiction not as problems but as looming catastrophes (to revert to our earlier distinction). This creates an incentive to steer grants to researchers whose work supposedly points to such grave threats, and that in turn creates an incentive for researchers to exaggerate the threat contained in their findings.

Still another factor is the EPA. Contrary to its image as a "science" agency, EPA devotes only 7 percent of its budget to research and development. Its bread and butter is regulation, and its regulatory activities are dominated by lawyers and managers rather than by scientists. EPA regulators are in the business not of producing research data but of characterizing the implications of such data—and in ways, naturally, that justify regulation. The same, of course, goes for environmental activists on the outside.

Lomborg has threatened the power of this augmented iron triangle like nobody before. As a foreigner, and a professor of statistics rather than earth science, he is not dependent on the good graces of any governmental science agency. As a former Greenpeacer and a self-identified leftist, he cannot be dismissed as a purchased corporate hack. As a talented writer and a good self-publicist, he has caught the attention of the press. Suddenly, environmental "public-interest organizations," long accustomed to presenting themselves, and to being treated, as the good guys, have found themselves on the receiving end.

Because Lomborg's book questioned the *scientific* credibility of the environmental movement, his own credibility had to be utterly destroyed. That is why he was compared to a Holocaust denier, accused of having no standing, and ridiculed for failing to get his facts straight. The bad news is that, because his attackers have included scientists, the false impression may have been generated that Lomborg has no case. The good news, as attested by the letter in *Nature*, is that the attack itself has been so strident and overblown as to create further doubts, at least among some, about the dogmatic orthodoxies of the environmentalist faith.

In the end, what Bjørn Lomborg has succeeded in showing, and his critics have conspicuously failed to dispute, is that the environmental movement frequently misleads the public and elected officials by presenting policy choices as necessities driven by scientific facts. They are no such thing. Policy choices are the province of those officials, and when it comes to deciding what the choices should be, no one speaks for "science." This is a hard lesson to learn, but an invaluable one.

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MUSIC

Why Listening Will Never Be the Same

Terry Teachout

LAST YEAR, for the first time, blank compact discs outsold pre-recorded ones. This statistic has been widely reported in the news media, usually in connection with the fact that sales of pre-recorded CD's in the U.S. dropped by 10 percent in 2001. To most observers of the music business, all this was further proof that the recording industry is in a state of acute crisis. But nowhere was it suggested that the CD-R (to use the trade name by which blank, recordable CD's are known) might be anything more than a superior replacement for the now-obsolete audio cassette—much less that its burgeoning popularity is the latest sign of a radical and irreversible change in the way we experience music.

Just as significant, and even less well known, is the fact that 31 million Americans to date have used their personal computers to share music files—that is, to send recordings to one another over the Internet. It is no secret that record companies see file-sharing as a threat to their existence, for which reason they are futilely attempting to impede its use, mostly through aggressive litigation and the introduction of new software that would make it harder to copy a CD. Again, however, the wider implications of this development have gone mostly unexplored. Anyone reading a typical newspaper story about file-sharing would be likely to conclude that the process, for all its unprecedented technical sophistication, does not differ in any essential way from making a cassette copy of a favorite album and giving it to a friend.

Of course, when it comes to the effects of technology on culture, skeptics are in good company. The prophets of the 20th century, utopian and dystopian alike, were in no doubt that middle-class Americans would by now be routinely conversing on picture phones and traveling to work in personal aircraft, *à la* George and Jane Jetson. And even as they were wrong about that, none of them foresaw the rise of the Internet, or the speed with which a relatively simple application like e-mail would become part of the everyday routine of tens of millions of people around the world.

I do not claim the gift of prophecy, but I have been using computers in my daily work for 25 years, longer than most Americans, and in that time I have acquired a healthy respect for their culture-shaping power. At the same time, I have become aware of a paradox: just as it is very difficult to grasp the potential of a new technology if one does not actually use it, using it can make it seem so routine as to be unremarkable. Since comparatively few people over the age of thirty have downloaded music files from the web and "burned" them onto CD-R's, they may find it hard to imagine how these technologies work, or to understand the dramatic impact they are having. By contrast, people *under* thirty, having spent their whole lives with personal computers, tend to take CD-burning and file-sharing for granted, and are less prone to speculate about their implications.

Let me, then, offer some thoughts on what it feels like to use the new computer-based listening technologies, and on how they are changing

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our larger musical culture and its existing institutional structures.

FIRST, A little history. For three-quarters of a century, records were made by a process now known as analog recording. In its earliest form, a musician would sing or play into the large end of a megaphone-like horn, which funneled the resulting sound waves to a recording needle. The waves made the needle vibrate, and the vibrating needle incised a correspondingly wavy groove into a rotating wax plate or cylinder. When the process was reversed, by the consumer, a needle placed in a groove would move in such a way as to generate new vibrations that resembled the original sound waves and could be used to reproduce them.

This process was replaced by today's digital recording, invented in 1976. In creating such a recording, a computer is used to convert sound waves not into an analogous physical object—a wavy groove in a wax plate, or an electronically recorded array of magnetized particles on a strip of plastic tape—but into a sequence of descriptive binary digits. When *this* process is reversed, the digits are first decoded and only then used to generate a fluctuating electrical signal analogous to the original sound waves. This signal is sent to a loudspeaker, which converts it into new waves closely resembling the original ones.

The initial advantage of digital recording was that it offered a more accurate way to reproduce sound. With the introduction in 1983 of the laser-scanned compact disc, in which sounds are stored in actual digital form rather than (as was the case with the first digital recordings to be commercially marketed) etched into the needle-cut grooves of a vinyl disc, it was widely thought that the digital revolution was complete. The larger significance of the break with analog recording was yet to penetrate. It was simply this: instead of manufacturing physical objects from which sounds could be reconstituted, engineers were now converting those same sounds into strings of numbers. As a result, it was no longer necessary to own the physical object in order to reproduce the music. All one needed was the numbers.

Herein lay the true digital revolution. When recorded sound is converted to numbers, it exits the realm of objects and enters the realm of ideas. To put it another way, it becomes pure information, transmissible from person to person by an infinite variety of means. In theory, I could call you up on the phone and read aloud a string of numbers representing a recorded performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and you in turn could write those numbers down, type them into a computer, and eventually translate them back into sound. The only catch is that such a "conversation" would last for weeks, or however long it would take to read out the millions of binary numbers comprising a digitized version of a piece of music. Hence the importance of the Internet, which allows computer users around the world to transmit digitized data over commercial telephone lines.

AT FIRST, admittedly, it was impractical to do this. So great was the sheer volume of information packed into a single CD that it required hours to transmit even a fairly short piece of music. But two recent developments have changed this situation dramatically. The first is the rapidly spreading availability of broadband cable modems that give high-speed Internet access to ordinary computer users. The second is the invention of MP3, the popular "data-reduction" software that compresses sound recordings into data files small enough to be stored on the hard drive of a personal computer, sent via e-mail, or downloaded from websites.

Such files can also be downloaded from "peer-to-peer" file-sharing sites, the best known of which is the now-defunct Napster. These sites are web-based clearing houses that allow their users to make MP3 files available for free to all other users. In addition, many record labels have launched or are launching online delivery systems from which their recordings can be downloaded for a fee.

How easy is it to do these things? I own an iBook, a laptop computer made by Apple. Bundled into its software is a program called iTunes. Whether I am downloading music directly from the web or uploading from CD's I already own, the process is the same.

I have already uploaded about 190 hours of music onto my iTunes player, ranging from sonatas and symphonies to bluegrass and rock-and-roll. The exercise is so simple that I was able to start using the player without bothering to look at an instruction manual. I insert one of my recorded compact discs into the computer and click a few keys. The computer then takes the contents of the disc—all of it or any combination of tracks, just as I choose—and converts them into MP3 files that are stored on my hard drive. It takes about 30 seconds to "rip" a three-minute song from a CD. Downloading works the same way, and just as fast: it recently took me all of thirteen seconds to download an MP3 file of a three-minute song by Ella Fitzgerald from amazon.com.

To play any of the 2,300 selections that are now on my iTunes player, I go to the "library" screen, find the title, and click on it twice. The music begins playing instantly. I like to listen through headphones, but if I wanted, I could also connect a set of external speakers to my computer, or use it as a component in my stereo system, just like a CD player. Since MP3 files are compressed, the resulting sound is not of the highest possible quality, but my forty-six-year-old ears are rarely capable of telling the difference be-

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tween an MP3 file and the original CD from which it has been ripped.

My iTunes player also burns CD-R's. In a matter of seconds, I can instruct it to record up to 75 minutes' worth of MP3 files from my computerized library, arranged in any order I want. Within a few minutes, I have a custom-made compact disc that I can play on my stereo, give to a friend, or drop in a mailbox and send to my mother. Should I find that process laborious, I can e-mail the same files to anyone equipped to receive them.

If, after reading this, you still doubt the power of the new computer-based technologies, consider: what I have done is to pack the equivalent of seven shelves' worth of CD's into a plastic box not much larger than a stack of eight issues of COMMENTARY. This box also contains the personal computer on which I do my writing and from which I send my e-mail. I can use it whenever and wherever I want—at my desk, in a hotel room, on a plane. Were I to find the box insufficiently portable, I could also purchase an iPod, Apple's version of a Walkman, into which the contents of my iTunes player can be dumped in about twenty minutes. An iPod is roughly the size of a cellular phone, and at present costs about $300.

None of these devices is a science-fiction fantasy. They are on sale now, and I use them every day.

AS PEOPLE start using personal computers in the way I have just described, their relationship to the experience of listening to recorded music will change accordingly.

The nature of this experience has yet to be adequately described by theorists of art, most of whom make flawed assumptions about the nature of what the Marxist critic Walter Benjamin, in his 1935 essay of the same name, called "the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction." Benjamin, for example, feared the loss of authenticity that he thought would be an inevitable consequence of the mass production of replicas of art works, a process that (in his words) substitutes "a plurality of copies for a unique existence." Conversely, André Malraux, writing in *Le Musée imaginaire* (1947), praised the prospect of a democratic "museum without walls" made possible by the widespread availability of just such replicas and reproductions.

In fact, however, traditional museums, rather than falling into desuetude, now attract larger audiences than ever, precisely because they offer viewers the opportunity to see handmade art objects whose existence *is* unique. Even the most unsophisticated museum-goer quickly comes to realize that no reproduction of a painting by Rembrandt or Cézanne can possibly convey more than the smallest part of the impact of the original.

But music is very different. Unlike a painting, the score of a Schubert song is not an art object in and of itself. It is a set of instructions that, if followed faithfully, will cause the object to be made manifest—once. But if music exists only through the act of performance, a recording of a Schubert song, being also a performance, does not bear the same relationship to a live performance that a reproduction of a painting does to the original. It is *not* a mere "replica," but an independent and fully valid way of experiencing the song.

Indeed, a record album can be, and usually is, an art object in its own right. I own several thousand CD's, each of which comprises a series of musical selections arranged in a specific order and (normally) intended to be listened to in that order. Some were recorded in concert, but most were created in a studio, often with the help of studio-specific techniques like tape splicing and overdubbing. Such famous albums as Glenn Gould's 1955 recording of the Bach "Goldberg" Variations, Frank Sinatra's *Only the Lonely*, Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, or the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* are not attempts to simulate live performances. They are, rather, unique experiences existing *only* on record, and the record itself, not the music or the performance, is the art object.

Since 1950 or so, objects like these have been the most significant forms of musical experience in the West—far more significant than live performances, and arguably even more so than specific musical compositions. Nor have they been rendered irrelevant by digital technology, any more than *Citizen Kane* made *War and Peace* irrelevant. But now something else is happening: when I load any one of these "objects" onto my iTunes player, I am opening myself up to the possibility of experiencing it in a completely new way.

All at once, the concrete object—the original album, with its cover art, liner notes, and carefully arranged sequence of tracks—ceases to exist. In its place is a string of abstract digits that I can manipulate at will. If I want, I can listen to the twelve songs that make up *Only the Lonely* in the order that they appear on the album. But I can also listen to them separately, in a different order, as part of a Frank Sinatra "greatest hits" sequence of my own devising, or in any other way that suits my fancy. Instead of permitting an artist or a record company to tell me how to listen, I am making my own choices.

This enhanced capacity for choice is central to the appeal of computer-based listening systems. Should I care for only one track on a CD, I can buy that CD, load it onto iTunes, and throw away the original disc. Or I can go to a website and download only that one song—which is just what young, computer-literate music lovers are increasingly doing. Instead of buying pop albums containing two or three good songs, they acquire the songs they like and listen to them in contexts of their own choosing. If record companies will not give them

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the power to make those choices themselves, they will take the power into their own hands by swapping MP3 files with friends, or downloading them from file-sharing sites.

THE SPREAD of computer-based listening has already started to alter the way records are made and marketed. A young jazz pianist who recently signed with a major label told me in conversation that to get people to buy his CD's, he now has to give them "something they can't get by going to hear me at a club, or downloading a couple of tracks off the web." Instead, he has to make albums that are strong from start to finish—a unified experience, not just "a studio jam session or a bunch of unrelated selections." And, he added, "it's not just the music, either. The packaging has to contribute to the total effect, too. Interesting liner notes, interesting art—all that really matters now."

Indeed it does, more so than ever. But such efforts, however ambitious and thoughtfully conceived, are still doomed to failure. In the not-so-long run, the introduction of online delivery systems and the spread of file-sharing will certainly undermine and very likely destroy the fundamental economic basis for the recording industry, at least as we know it today. Nor can there be much doubt that within a few years, the record album will lose its once-privileged place at the heart of Western musical culture.

And what will replace it? I, for one, think it highly likely that more and more artists will start to make their own recordings and market them directly to the public via the web.* Undoubtedly, new managerial institutions will emerge to assist those artists who prefer not to engage in the time-consuming task of self-marketing, but these institutions will be true middlemen, purveyors of a service, as opposed to record labels, which use artists to serve *their* interests. And while most artists will also employ technical assistants of various kinds, such as freelance recording engineers, the ultimate responsibility for their work will belong—for the first time ever—to the artists themselves.

What form that work will take is another question entirely. Prior to the invention in 1948 of the LP, popular musicians usually recorded not albums but specific songs or pieces of music that were released on single 78's and meant to be experienced individually. Perhaps, then, there will never be another *Only the Lonely* or *Kind of Blue*, but, once again, only individual selections like "One for My Baby" or "All Blues." Or possibly new modes of presentation will evolve, in the same way that Internet "magazines" are developing web-specific features like "The Corner," a chatty group-discussion page that has become the most widely read department of *National Review Online*.

To be sure, this prospect is understandably disturbing to many older musicians and music lovers, given the fact that the record album has played so pivotal a role in the culture of postwar music. Nor do I claim that life without records will necessarily be better—or worse. It will, however, be *different*, just as the lives of actors were irrevocably changed by the invention of the motion-picture camera in ways that no one could possibly have foreseen in 1900.

One thing is already clear: hard though it may be to imagine life without records and record stores, it is only a matter of time, and not much time at that, before they disappear. Unlike museums and opera houses, they serve a purpose that technology has rendered obsolete. The triumph of the digit—along with the demise of the record album as culture-shaping art object—is at hand.

* The London and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras, as well as a growing number of individual classical musicians, have already responded to the decline of the major classical record labels by starting to make and distribute their own CD's, though they are not yet generally available for direct downloading. For a discussion of the effects of file-sharing on classical music, see my essay, "What Killed Classical Recording?" (COMMENTARY, May 2001).

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What are the facts?

No "Sacrifice" Will Overcome the Hatred: Many still believe that the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews could be settled if the Israelis were willing to bring greater "sacrifices for peace". Such "sacrifices" would include relinquishing ever-larger portions of their tiny country (less than half the size of San Bernardino County in California) to the Palestinians, dismantling the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), handing the Golan Heights to Syria, and allowing the "return of the refugees" a group that has grown miraculously from about 500,000 to somewhere around 5 million, and the absorption of even a substantial fraction of which would signify the demographic end of the Jewish state. But by now, after almost two years of the bloody war against Israel in the Al Aksa Intifada, it is clear to even the most confirmed "doves", to even the most ardent supporters of the "Oslo Peace Process," that absolutely nothing that Israel could do, any further "sacrifice" that Israel were prepared to bring would satisfy the Arabs and would promote peace. The sad but irrefutable conclusion is that only the complete disappearance of Israel, its annihilation, its being wiped off the map could satisfy the Arabs and most of the Moslem world.

During his recent visit to Syria, not too long ago, the Pope listened to Bashar-al-Asad, the President of Syria, declare that "...the Jews have betrayed Jesus Christ, with the same mentality with which they tried to betray and kill the prophet Mohammed." (Disappointingly, the Pope did not protest this canard, either right then or at a later date.) Saddam Hussein, the tyrant of Iraq, expressed the wishes of his country and of the Arab world with the succinct entreaty "God damn the Jews."

Mortal Hatred and the "Big Lie": The "big lie," invented by the notorious Joseph Goebbels of Nazi infamy, is a mainstay of Arab hatred and propaganda. In Egypt and Jordan (the two Arab countries technically at peace with Israel), government-controlled news sources published that Israel had distributed drug-laced chewing gum and candy to kill children and to make women sexually corrupt. The Jews (Israelis) are being accused of having introduced foot-and-mouth disease in the Middle East. The age-old calumny of Jews using the blood of Christian and Moslem children in order to bake their Passover matzos is alive and well in Arab publications. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an egregious falsification originating in Czarist Russia, is a steady best-seller in all Arab countries. Among other malevolent fabrications, it accuses "international Jewry" of "limitless ambition, inexhaustible greed, and hatred beyond imagination."

> "Israel's only course...is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence...and not to be inhibited...to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country."

In the controlled Arab press, Holocaust denial and accusation of the Zionists having been in cahoots with the German Nazis are regular features. Egypt's government-sponsored *Al Akhbar* newspaper has expressed fervent thanks to Adolf Hitler for having taken advance revenge on the "vilest criminals on the face of the earth." Still, it berates him for not having been thorough enough in his task of extermination. The Arabs do not consider Israel a normal country, but a creation of the devil, an excrescence, a malignant force of aggressors, murderers, infidels and barbarians. It should be destroyed, for the glory of God, no matter what sacrifices that might entail.

Mortal hatred against Israel and against the Jews is taught to Arab children from the very first grade. Children are encouraged to sacrifice themselves as martyrs and suicide missiles, with promises that Paradise with unimaginable pleasures awaits those who sacrifice themselves in the holy cause of killing Jews.

This bottomless hatred, a hatred that pervades the Arab world in all strata of society and is incessantly fomented by Arab governments, including those supposed to be "at peace" with Israel, cannot be assuaged by negotiation or by making any further "sacrifices for peace". Nothing will suffice, except the destruction, the complete disappearance of Israel. The Arab states, having been unable in over fifty years and in many wars to defeat and exterminate the hated Jews, are now feverishly arming themselves with "conventional weapons" (easily purchased from the West, including, sad to say, from the United States), and are ardently pursuing the development of weapons of mass annihilation. Just as the suicide bombers do not vacillate to sacrifice themselves, one can safely expect that, once in possession of such weapons, the Arabs will not hesitate to sacrifice millions of their own people in order to destroy Israel. Israel's only course in the face of this almost certain prospect is to assume its previous stance of unflinching deterrence and, as it once did in the destruction of the Iraqi atomic reactor at Osirak in 1981, not to be inhibited by "international opinion" to preempt resolutely if it appears necessary to assure survival of the country.

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Books in Review

Your Children Shall Return

Across the Sabbath River:
In Search of a Lost
Tribe of Israel
by Hillel Halkin
Houghton Mifflin. 392 pp. $28.00

Reviewed by
Jon D. Levenson

THE IDEA that the Israelites—the people later called the "Jews"—once lost ten of their twelve tribes begins with two notices in the biblical book of Kings. The first records events from about 733 B.C.E.:

> Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel and Samaria—for twenty years. He did what was displeasing to the Lord. . . . In the days of King Pekah, King Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor—Gilead, Galilee, the entire region of Naphtali; and he deported the inhabitants to Assyria.

The second relates an assault of larger scale and greater consequence by Tiglath-Pileser's son and successor, Shalmaneser V, in 722 B.C.E. This time, "the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, at the [River] Habor, at the River Gozan, and in the towns of Media." The sites listed are found today in the northern parts of Iraq and Syria and in northwestern Iran, but the Bible gives no indication of the subsequent fate of the Israelite exiles deported there.

The thought that the exiles disappeared forever, melding (as countless Jews have done) with the peoples around them, is not one the biblical authors accepted lightly. The prophet Jeremiah, for example, about a century later, envisions Rachel, the matriarch of three of the tribes, in mourning:

> Rachel weep[s] for her
> children.
> She refuses to be comforted
> For her children, who are
> gone.

Remarkably, the prophet then depicts God answering the mother's grief with the best news imaginable:

> They shall return from the
> enemy's land,
> And there is hope for your
> future
> —declares the Lord:
> Your children shall return to
> their country.

Even much later than this, Jewish sources continued to speak of Israel as a twelve-tribe confederation, long after at least ten of those tribes had disappeared.

IN HIS spirited, engaging, and charmingly written account of his own involvement in a search for a lost tribe of Israel, the noted Israeli author and translator Hillel Halkin reviews the simultaneously tragic and romantic notion that the lost children have survived and are alive to this very day. He tells, for example, the story of Eldad the Danite, a man who appeared in North Africa late in the 9th century C.E., full of tales of Israelite tribes organized into a

JON D. LEVENSON *is the Albert A. List professor of Jewish studies at Harvard and the author of* The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity *(Yale) and* Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible *(HarperCollins).*

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kingdom warring with neighboring Ethiopia. And he writes of David the Reubenite, who surfaced in Venice in 1523, claiming that his brother ruled a kingdom of 300,000 souls drawn from the transjordanian tribes. Scoffed at by some but believed by others, David succeeded in meeting with both the Pope and the king of Portugal, attempting to persuade the latter to assist him in attacking the Ottoman empire and capturing Jerusalem. But the lost children did not reappear, and the missions of their self-styled representatives came to naught. Eldad simply vanished from history; David died in an Inquisitorial prison.

Still, whatever may have happened to the lost tribes themselves, the idea that they still exist refuses to die. In the 17th century, Halkin informs us, it helped the Dutch rabbi Manasseh ben Israel persuade Oliver Cromwell to readmit the Jews (expelled from England in 1290) into his Puritan commonwealth. In the 19th century, the legend of the lost tribes deeply influenced Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon* and thus helped launch a major—and growing—religious community. Halkin makes the important observation that the legend can just as easily reflect an anti-Semitic attitude as a philo-Semitic one:

> It has never been easy for Christianity to accept Jesus' Jewishness, a matter traditionally played down in different ways. For some Christians, the discovery of ancient Israelites surviving as noble savages far removed from the anti-Semitic caricature of the sneaking Pharisee or the craven Shylock was a welcome solution to an old dilemma. In the Christian no less than the Jewish imagination, the lost tribes stood for a different kind of Jew, one whom no one had to be ashamed of.

Indeed, given the traditional claim of the Church to be the true Israel, it should not surprise us to find, as Halkin does, that the legend of the lost tribes played a central role in Christian groups like the British Israelite movement, which argued that the British were the genuine Jews. Nor has this particular tradition died out; various white-supremacist groups make a pronounced and pernicious use of it into our own day.

WHEN HALKIN'S tale opens, we find him in China with an Israeli rabbi named Eliahu Avichail, a veteran lost-tribe hunter. Avichail believes that "the process of [messianic] redemption is already under way," and among the great tasks it imposes upon the Jewish people is "to restore lost Jewish souls." The two Israelis have come to China to follow up an old report, dating at least to a Scottish missionary 80 years ago, that a group called the Chiang practices a distinctive religion reminiscent of that of biblical Israel. Alas, the trail goes cold, and Halkin fails to find even "the remotest connection between the Chiang religion and the Bible."

After a similar experience investigating a group in northwest Thailand, Halkin and Avichail, and then Halkin alone, turn their attention to much more promising territory: the Indian provinces of Mizoram and Manipur, lying roughly between Bangladesh and Myanmar (formerly Burma). Here, they find Tibeto-Burmese groups that now claim descent from Manasseh, the eponymous ancestor of one of the ten lost tribes, and they learn of numerous practices that do indeed suggest a biblical connection—e.g., a "seven-day period of mourning for the dead," "rules of sanctuary for unintentional murderers," "priestly garments like those described in the book of Exodus," even "a single supreme God." But they also find what Halkin calls "blank spaces on the screen"—nothing like the Sabbath, for example, or kashrut (the Jewish dietary system), not even the prohibition on pork, which happens to be "a staple in their diet" (though Halkin does hear tantalizing reports that the priests do not eat of the pigs they sacrifice).

Halkin's account of his experiences in Mizoram and Manipur is in part a marvelously exotic travelogue, in part an adventure story, in part a mystery tale, and in part the field report of a hardheaded cultural anthropologist. In each of these dimensions, it is fascinating, full of vividly rendered encounters with a wide range of human types: activists, charlatans, the oldest living Mizo (ninety-eight), Jewish-Christian syncretists, not to mention the inevitable factions fighting with each other. The encounters themselves are rendered with insight, wit, and considerable humor, and the book's maps and glossary help at least somewhat in coping with the large number of foreign terms and unpronounceable names one meets along the way.

As an amateur anthropologist, Halkin proves highly sophisticated, displaying a consistent and altogether admirable refusal to indulge in wishful thinking. When confronted by native Mizo practices that recall biblical ones, he investigates the cultural environment, often finding that the coincidence is just that. He is also alert, as not every investigator has been, to the possibility that some of the biblical lore and practices he comes across originate not in authentic vestiges of an all but vanished Israelite past but in the encounter with Christian missionaries in modern times. And unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries in the lost-tribe industry, he is keenly aware of the cultural dynamics and psychological processes that might incline groups in places like northeastern India to *want* to reconceive of themselves as Jews in the first place:

> It was their unconscious uncertainty about Christianity itself that accounted for the Mizo's lost-tribe fever. Psychologically, they had a problem. They were indebted to the Christian church.

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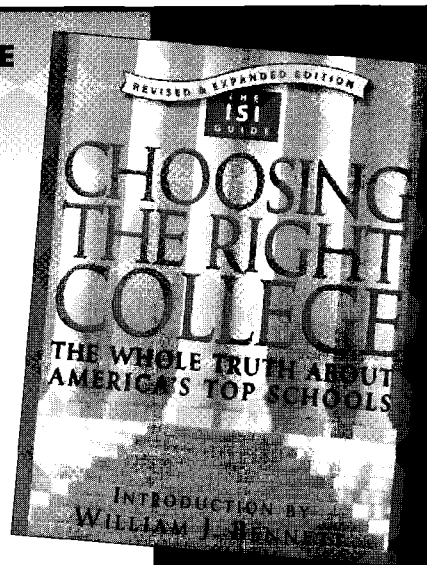
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It had brought them great benefits . . . .

Yet deep in their hearts the Mizos knew Christianity had killed something vital. Had they read the Hebrew Bible, they might have recognized what this was. . . . Here was a book in which there were no namby-pamby apostles but real men and women who fought, killed, lusted, took slaves and prisoners, and worshiped God with animal blood. And were God's chosen!

Eventually, in any case, Halkin's exhaustively researched leads dry up, and he resigns himself to failure; heading home, he consoles himself with the satisfactions of a job well done:

My face to the wind out of Asia, I was not distressed by this [failure]. Although it would have been grand to come home with a unicorn on a leash, merely chasing one was good too. There was a satisfaction in solving a puzzle even if the solution was mundane.

But then, as in any good detective story, riveting new evidence suddenly turns up, evidence for which the old explanations seem unable to account. By the end of the book, Halkin's dogged sleuthing has established a plausible case *for* the Israelite origins of these little-known Tibeto-Burmese peoples, who in so many ways seem so distant from their putative Jewish cousins. Some authentic descendants of the lost tribes of Israel have at last been found.

Or have they?

EVEN MORE than a thoroughly absorbing detective story, Hillel Halkin's new book serves as a kind of allegory for the tensions and problems in Jewish identity itself. For, no less than he—indeed, more than he—the people he interviews are on a quest. At one point, a Mizo activist tells him, "with sudden, hard candor":

Look here. I don't care what my religion is. I want to know who I am. Show me I was once a Christian, and I'll be a Christian. Show me I was a Jew, and I'll be a Jew. Show me I was an idol worshiper, and I'll worship idols. *But show me who I am.*

In an exchange with another tribesman, the hunger for authenticity becomes even more explicit, and more connected with Jewishness:

"We Kukis do not belong to this place," he said of Manipur. "We have been here for hundreds of years, yet it is not ours. Have you ever heard of an entire people feeling out of place where their ancestors were born?"

Apart from the Jews, I confessed, I never had. "There you are!" he said, vindicated. "You see, we are not a happy people. We are always yearning."

To relocate to Israel—something many of these people devoutly wish to do—would solve only part of the problem. For they seek something more: continuity with the biblical past, and a pattern of practice that answers to the special status God has conferred upon them. This particular yearning, however, the otherwise sympathetic Halkin finds it all but impossible to share:

Being Jewish, it seemed to me, was a fate, marvelous and perverse, best appreciated with a dash of humor rarely found among converts. But this was not something I could tell the Mizos, who took their religion seriously and believed in comparative shopping.

And thus, when at long last he finds the treasure he has been seeking, it remains unclear just what the treasure means. The "lost-tribe legend in a nutshell," he had written earlier, was this: "the dreamed-of prize was always farther on, beyond the last village, over the last mountain." But what do you do with the prize once it is in your hands? This is a question that Halkin is not alone in being unable to resolve satisfactorily—though his humble tribesmen, for all their lack of sophistication, seem to perceive the answer with enviable clarity.

Getting In

The Gatekeepers: Inside the Admissions Process of a Premier College

by Jacques Steinberg

Viking. 292 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

JACQUES STEINBERG'S *The Gatekeepers*, an account of the admissions system at Wesleyan University, is enormously readable. It is also revelatory, if not always in ways the author intends. The process it describes is opaque to most students applying to college, and Steinberg, a *New York Times* reporter specializing in education, plainly scored a coup when Wesleyan agreed to give him a close-quarters look at how it all works at one, presumably representative, elite institution.

Over a span of eight months, ending in the spring of 2000—the period when the class of 2004 was being selected—Steinberg was given more or less unlimited access to one of the college's nine admissions officers, an experienced, hard-working chap named Ralph Figueroa. He also received bountiful cooperation from other major players in the admissions process; got to see the applicants' grades, test scores, and essays; spent time with many of these students; and even met some of their high-school college counselors. More dramatically, Steinberg was allowed to sit in on the conferences where the critical votes were cast—accept, reject, wait-list—and

DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor of* Forbes.

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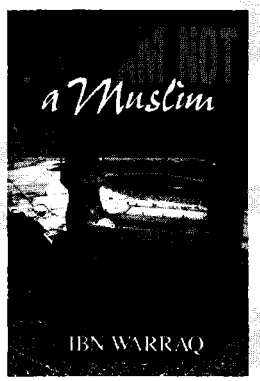

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Foreword by R. Joseph Hoffmann

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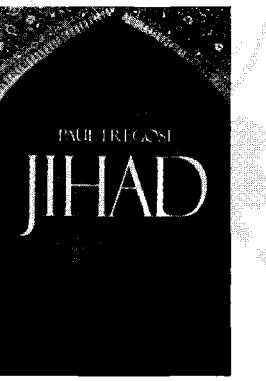

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John F. Murphy Jr.

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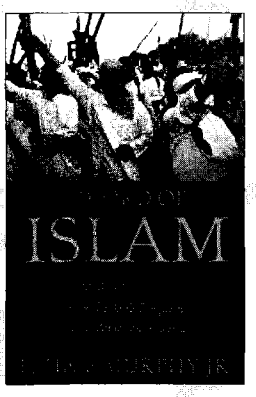

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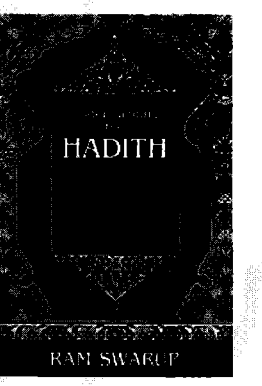

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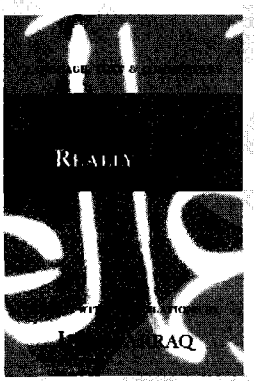

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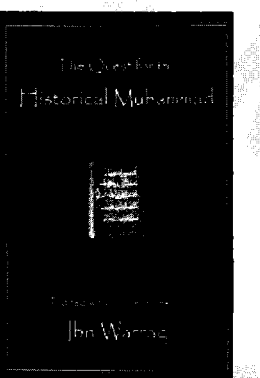

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to observe the admissions officers' strategies for helping or hurting controversial candidates. His cast of characters is huge, and real names are used throughout.

HIGH-SCHOOL SENIORS suffering the traumas of this process may wonder whether the decision-makers really bother studying the extensive data in every application folder. On the persuasive evidence presented by Steinberg, Wesleyan's gatekeepers are conscientious readers. Indeed, some of them get overinvolved in the process and are somewhat traumatized themselves when candidates they like are rebuffed. Playing God obviously has its downside, especially in an admissions process chronically overwhelmed by the number of applicants needing to be evaluated.

Wesleyan tries to bring aboard about 715 freshmen each year, but the number of applicants keeps rising, and was close to 7,000 for the class of 2004. With few exceptions, each application is reviewed by at least two admissions officers, and sometimes the dean of admissions will go over it as well. In one two-month stretch, each of the admissions officers had around 1,000 applications to read and judge. Super-conscientious Ralph Figueroa would never devote less than twenty minutes to even the most dismal entry, and frequently found himself reading essays over and over, and then reading them aloud to his wife at the end of the day. "Sometimes," Steinberg tells us, "they would cry together at the depth of feeling some of those pieces expressed."

Of the roughly 7,000 applicants, close to 1,000 had applied for "early admission," a deal in which the students agree that, if accepted, they will withdraw all applications to other colleges. At Wesleyan, about 300 of the 1,000 applicants were accepted this way, getting the happy news by February. That left 400-plus positions to fill in the regular admissions process. But since only about one quarter of the regular admittees ultimately opt for Wesleyan—often a second or third choice in the elite college merry-go-round—the admissions officers had to produce some 1,600 offers. In 2000, they opted to settle for around 1,500, figuring that if they came up short in the end, they could turn to the waiting list.

Wesleyan, it turns out, is every bit as market-driven as General Electric. And it is not alone. All the elite colleges seem to live in perpetual dread of losing market share as measured in the annual rankings published by the newsweekly *U.S. News & World Report*. They want ratings that tell the world of their invincible appeal to the best students. They want to show high average SAT scores—freshmen at Wesleyan can generally point to a combined math-verbal score around 1350, out of a possible 1600—even while admitting a fair number of low-scoring minority students. A claim to be elite requires low overall acceptance rates, and Wesleyan's 15 percent or so is excellent. Also important are high average "acceptance yields," i.e., a good showing in the number of accepted students who decide to attend; on this last measure, Wesleyan's 25 percent is okay but not great. Finally, on the list of best liberal-arts colleges, Wesleyan ranks a respectable eleventh and worries about falling much lower.

Students who emerge as star attractions in this process often get free trips all over America to look at campuses and meet professors. Steinberg tells us about a multiracial (black, white, Latina) young lady named Julianna Bentes for whom all the elite colleges were panting. She finished near the top of her class at a first-rate high school, had a combined SAT score over 1500, and was a talented dancer.

Stanford shamelessly promised Julianna that she would meet undergraduate Chelsea Clinton if she came to visit Palo Alto, and so she did. She also visited Wesleyan, where the student assigned to escort her around the campus took her to a meeting of a group called the Cunt Club. An approved student organization that is listed by name on the college website and receives student-government funds, this club introduces its members to various sex toys and aims to empower women in their encounters with men or other women. It appears that Ralph Figueroa, who had been pursuing the nice young lady for years, came close to tearing out his hair when he heard where his prized prospect had been taken. In the end, Julianna was accepted at all thirteen of the institutions she applied to, and ended up at Yale, where, Steinberg informs us, she could recently be found protesting the American "obliteration" of Afghanistan.

FIGUEROA TELLS Steinberg that he sympathizes with the huge public universities that lack "the time and resources to put a student's SAT scores in context [and] often had to choose many of their students by feeding a combination of grades and test scores into a computer." How dreadful, the reader is invited to think. Yet a case could be made that Wesleyan itself would do far less damage in its admissions process if it simply settled for the computer. The school's elaborate procedures for reinterpreting grades and test scores in order to guarantee high admission rates for minorities—blacks are targeted to get 11 percent of the freshman class—are patently unfair and, arguably, have created illegal quotas.

Like Wesleyan itself and the universe of elite institutions in general, Steinberg is orthodox in his commitment to affirmative action and the ideas invoked to support it. Indeed, it is impossible to believe that Wesleyan would have offered him such unparalleled access had he not obviously embraced the cause. Among the familiar liberal refrains

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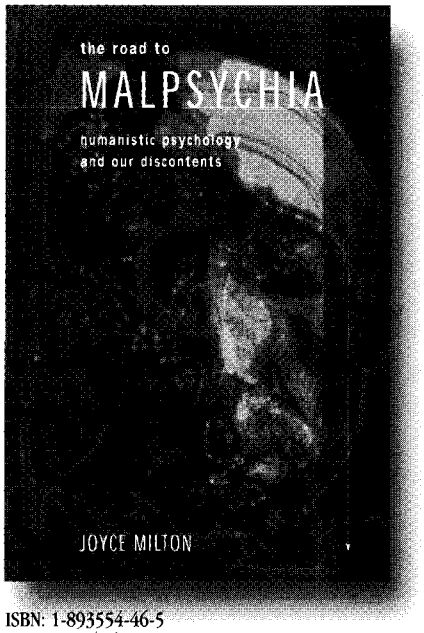
Whatever Happened to the Human Potential Movement?



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The Road To Malpsychia:
Humanistic Psychology and Our Discontents
by Joyce Milton

"Joyce Milton guides us through a maze of cults, enthusiasms, and guff."
— *Harper's Magazine*

"Milton has done a real service in tracing the excesses of postwar psychology."
— *The Wall Street Journal*

Joyce Milton's fascinating book begins in the early 1960s with psychologist Abraham Maslow's prediction that psychologists would soon seize control of values from religion and be able to create an ideal society made up of "self-actualized men and women." Maslow became the prophet of the new humanistic psychology movement. Its leading practitioner was Carl Rogers, the California human potential guru who used encounter groups to teach people to get in touch with the dark impulses of their "true selves." And the marketer-in-chief was Harvard's Timothy Leary, who saw LSD as a tool for helping in the task of deconstructing the "Judeo-Calvanist" worldview.

The Road to Malpsychia charts the rise of the human potential movement and shows how it dead-ended in a mass cult of narcissism. Featuring priceless portraits not only of Maslow and Leary, but of movement matriarchs Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead and psycho-entrepreneurs like est's Werner Erhardt, Joyce Milton's story describes the temper of our time. We finish this book understanding how we came to be trapped in a therapeutic culture today.

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here presented as simple truths is the idea that whites benefit as much as minorities from a "diverse" student body.

Still, Steinberg's reporting allows us to see the elaborate dodges that Wesleyan has developed for defining "merit" down—that is, for finding that the low-scoring minority applicant is somehow more qualified than the white or Asian with a stellar SAT score. His portraits of selected students—selected apparently because they were of special interest to Ralph Figueroa—repeatedly demonstrate that the SAT is an extremely good predictor of college success, especially as compared to the wishful sociological forecasting of admissions officers.

Figueroa, for instance, was determined to get a Native American into Wesleyan and fastened on a personable young man named Migizi Pensoneau, "Mig" for short. It seems that Mig had scored only 1210 on the SAT, well below the Wesleyan median, but had recently improved his high-school grades and, as Figueroa wrote in his own summary of the case, "Would Add" (meaning that he would somehow enhance the college's general environment). Mig was accepted into Wesleyan by a 7-2 vote of the admissions committee. He dropped out toward the end of his freshman year after flunking physics, Greek drama, and neurobiology. He obviously had some talent, but was overmatched at Wesleyan.

The opposite case—a gifted student rejected by Wesleyan—is exemplified in the tale of Tiffany Wang, a young lady from a well-to-do California family of Taiwanese origins. Her grades were excellent, and her combined SAT score was 1450. This included a 750 on the verbal test, truly spectacular for a student who had been brought up in a Chinese-speaking household. In addition, she had been a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist, had played high-school basketball, and had a range of extracurricular interests, including extensive—and exquisitely politically correct—correspondence with death-row inmates.

So what was the rap on her? Partly that other Asian-American students at her high school had even higher SAT's. Partly that her parents were wealthy and college-educated, which made her "privileged." Also, she had opted to take "very demanding"—but not "the most demanding"—courses offered by her high school. So Tiffany was consigned to the waiting list, where her prospects were dim. Declining to wait, she decided to go to NYU, where, not surprisingly, she is now doing fine.

The late news on Ralph Figueroa is that he has taken a job as a high-school guidance counselor in Albuquerque. The job pays more than the $43,000 a year he was making at Wesleyan, and he will be closer to his parents. Best of all, he will still be able to help college-bound students, and without the awful burden of playing God.

The Conjure Man

Chesnutt:
Stories, Novels, and Essays
Edited by Werner Sollors
Library of America. 939 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Phillip M. Richards

THIS NEW entry in the Library of America introduces the general reader to Charles W. Chesnutt, a major 19th-century black writer. Primarily limiting itself to the years between 1899 and 1902, when he was at the height of his powers, it offers Chesnutt's two best-known collections of stories, his two best novels, and a handful of essays. Taken as a whole, and alongside other recent gatherings of Chesnutt's hitherto uncollected essays and unpublished fiction, it helps establish him as a master of the American short story and a significant practitioner of regionalist and realist fiction in the age of William Dean Howells. It also confirms his status as a towering figure among his black contemporaries, whether thinkers like W. E. B. Du Bois or sentimentalists (and contemporary academic favorites) like Frances Harper.

Chesnutt's mother was a North Carolina mulatto who resided in the black settlement in Cleveland, Ohio, where he was born in 1858. Beginning his schooling in the North, he continued after the Civil War in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where his father struggled as a grocer and farmer. A precocious boy, he left home at fourteen to become an assistant teacher in Charlotte before taking up a variety of other school positions. But within five years his own formal education was ended by poverty.

Not, however, his life-long quest for learning. On his own, the young man acquired French, German, and Latin (one of his tutors, a Jewish immigrant, was threatened with violence for teaching a black). He also immersed himself in English literature, continental fiction (German and French), and, significantly for his later work, African-American folk culture.

In 1883, having taught himself stenography, Chesnutt left the South to work in legal offices in New York and then Cleveland, where he and his family settled and where he remained until his death in 1932. In 1887 he passed the Ohio bar exam with the highest grade in his cohort, and at the same time started to publish stories that quickly gained an audience and the appreciation of critics. By 1899, Houghton Mifflin had published

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PHILLIP M. RICHARDS *is an associate professor of English at Colgate.*

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the two collections included in this volume: *The Conjure Woman*, tales of the post-Civil War South that drew deftly on southern traditions of magic, storytelling, and dialect, and *The Wife of His Youth*, carefully observed narratives set in, among other places, a Cleveland-like northern city and "Patesville,"a small North Carolina town not unlike Fayetteville.

Chesnutt's path was in many respects the traditional American path of the self-made man, and his own pride in that circumstance, as well as his consciousness of its many ironies, is amply evident in his work. But he also partook, and to an equal degree of self-consciousness, of the Protestant-Victorian ethic that had shaped the life of the black bourgeoisie in the antebellum North and that after the War migrated southward to influence the black churches, colleges, and cultural institutions founded during Reconstruction (1865-1877).

Unapologetically grounded in white middle-class values, this black culture honored frugality, hard work, cleanliness, and genteel erudition. Its aura can be felt in the work of such writers as Charlotte Forte Grimke, Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, and Du Bois. In Chesnutt's case, it provided not only a framework of self-understanding but an important literary theme in his stories, his journals, and later in the speeches and essays he addressed to black audiences in the North.

Chesnutt's two story collections manifest considerable powers of observation and narrative skill. But he was no mere entertainer. In *The Conjure Woman*, he appropriated a ready-made cast of characters from the plantation tradition of southern writing: paternalistic masters, faithful retainers, generous black mammies, yarn-spinning "darkies." But in Chesnutt's hands these stock characters inhabit an intricate moral universe in which greedy masters find their ruin, wily slaves destroy themselves by their own conniving, and wise bondsmen achieve revenge over foolish overseers. In *The Wife of His Youth*, Chesnutt similarly deflates the pretensions of both blacks and whites in the postwar urban North, showing how the interracial understandings of the pre-Civil-War South continued to affect the persistently segregated societies both above and below the Mason-Dixon line.

The success of these two books stimulated Chesnutt's ambition. Temporarily abandoning legal ste-

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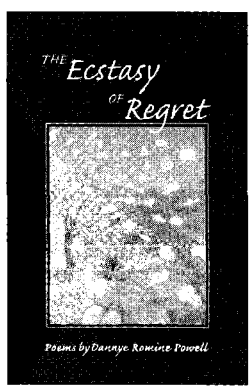

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nography at the turn of the century, he struck out as a professional writer. He also turned to the novel as a literary genre offering a broader field for social observation than the short story and, incidentally, holding out the promise of greater financial reward. In 1900 he published *The House Behind the Cedars*, followed rapidly in 1901 by *The Marrow of Tradition*, a work inspired by the Wilmington riots. Both are included in this volume.

Chesnutt's hopes for a self-sufficient literary career went unfulfilled; by 1905, with the publication of *The Colonel's Dream*, he had returned to legal stenography. Still, in *The House Behind the Cedars* and *The Marrow of Tradition* he had produced two genuine and lasting, if flawed, achievements. The former, although marred by a weak plot, inadequately conceived characters, and a shrill political voice, stands as a probing meditation on the myth of the self-made man. The latter, likewise vulnerable to criticism for its stereotyped re-creation of the southern planter class and its melodramatic turns of plot, renders a compelling and at moments horrifying picture of the Jim-Crow South. Both books anticipate Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912) as explorations of the inner life of the black middle class: its memories of the brief opportunities presented by Reconstruction and its encounter in the 1890's with white resentment, lower-class black rage, and its own increasing sense of political and intellectual impotence.

In his later years, Chesnutt returned to these themes in two unpublished novels that have only recently been recovered, *Paul Marchand, FMC* (1921) and *The Quarry* (1928). But by then his work was already being superseded. By the mid-1920's, black writers like Jean Toomer (*Cane*) and Nella Larsen (*Quicksand* and *Passing*) were using modernist conventions of narrative and perspective that left in the dust Chesnutt's old-fashioned plots and sentimental appeals.

More to the point, perhaps, the Victorian norms that Chesnutt had explored and tested but never abandoned seemed unsuited to the challenges of the age. As the 20th century progressed, the Great Migration brought new generations of poor black Southerners northward. Despite his earlier, seemingly inexhaustible interest in black manners, customs, and society, Chesnutt evinced little curiosity about the newcomers. Although his political commitments remained unchanged—an active member of the NAACP, he received the organization's highest award, the Spingarn medal, in 1928—he could not fully appreciate the urban situation in evidence mere blocks from his home, and he was not a promoter of the emerging generation of black writers who took that situation as their subject.

But that is the wrong note on which to end. To read this new edition of Chesnutt's work is to see him not only as the first major black American novelist, and not only as a master of the short story, but also as the preeminent literary voice of what still remains—or is once again, a century later—a powerful cultural ethos. In the world of black letters, that ethos was thoroughly overturned by the radical wing of the Harlem Renaissance and has been essentially out of fashion ever since. But it resonates with peculiar force today, when Chesnutt's "naive" invocations of American individualism and his complicated and far from naive allegiance to the ethic of hard work and personal advancement seem both tonic and wholly relevant. This is, in short, a most opportune moment for a new generation to be introduced to the work of a fascinating writer and a sophisticated commentator on America's racial realities.

History of a German

Defying Hitler:
A Memoir
by Sebastian Haffner
Translated by Oliver Pretzel
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 309 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Daniel Johnson

FROM THE English title of this book one might expect it to be another rehearsal of the doomed German resistance to the Third Reich. But that is not its subject. Nor is it a memoir of any of the various plots against Hitler's life (though it does help explain why such amateurish attempts came so late, and failed so miserably). The original German-language title, *History of a German*, fits it much better.

An unfinished manuscript, written "for the drawer" in the last months before the outbreak of World War II, and published posthumously in Germany only two years ago—minus six chapters that were discovered in March of this year and that have now been incorporated into the English-language edition—this book is at once a history of its own time and a work of prophecy and prophylaxis. Interpreting events in Germany through the prism of bitter personal experience, Sebastian Haffner intended his analysis of the Nazi "revolution" as a lament for his defeated countrymen, and a warning to those among them who were thinking of fighting it. In a little over 300 pages, he offers a solution to one of the great mysteries of the 20th century: why one of the most civilized nations in the world capitulated without a struggle, prostrating itself before the most fiendish gang ever to seize control of a modern state.

DANIEL JOHNSON, *associate editor of the (London)* Daily Telegraph, *is at work on a history of German thought. His article, "What Victor Klemperer Saw," appeared in the June 2000* COMMENTARY.

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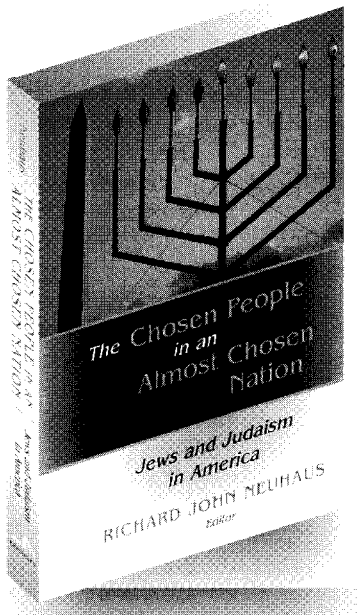
Who was Sebastian Haffner? It was partly in order to answer this question for himself that he began writing his memoirs in exile in 1939, at the age of thirty-two. By this time, he had witnessed the last years of the German Empire and lived through World War I, the Weimar Republic, and the early days of the Third Reich. Having earned his credentials as a lawyer, Haffner, whose real name was Raimund Pretzel, had discovered his true vocation as a journalist. He emigrated to England in 1938, taking the pen-name Sebastian Haffner (adapted from Mozart's symphony) in order to protect his relatives in Germany.

Haffner was an unconventional conservative. His family was not Jewish—his father had been a senior Prussian civil servant—and he was not forced into opposition or exile. His loathing of the Nazis was, however, visceral, growing more intense as he witnessed at first hand the progressive humiliation of his Jewish acquaintances, friends, and lovers. He eventually married a Jewish woman, after they had both emigrated.

Unlike many German émigrés, Haffner was a success in England, where he was taken up by David Astor, scion of the great newspaper dynasty and editor of the *Observer*, the leading liberal weekly. Haffner turned himself into the paper's chief specialist in foreign affairs, contributing influential columns and editorials both during the war and afterward. Too ardently anti-Soviet for Astor's taste, Haffner eventually returned to Germany as the *Observer*'s correspondent, there to begin a new career as a commentator on radio and television. In the postwar decades, and until his death in 1999, he was one of the most celebrated journalists in Germany; his books on history and politics enjoyed an international reputation.

One of these later books, a short work titled *The Meaning of Hitler* (1979), remains among the best in a very crowded field. Sketching his portrait in a few bold strokes, Haffner made it a point to acknowledge the dictator's achievements and successes without in any way glorifying him à la David Irving; only thus, he believed, was it possible to understand the acquiescence of so many in his crimes. Haffner also challenged the conventional identification of Hitler exclusively with the German Right and, again unconventionally, attached supreme significance to his racial ideology. With the declaration of war against the United States at the end of 1941, he argued, Hitler effectively abandoned his goal of world domination and subordinated everything to the extermination of the Jews.

In the end, Haffner contended in *The Meaning of Hitler*, the nation that was harmed the most by Hitler



The Chosen People in an Almost Chosen Nation

Jews and Judaism in America

EDITED BY
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

Culled from the pages of the journal *First Things*, the essays and commentaries gathered here take up the broad array of viewpoints, questions, and disputes that comprise the story of Judaism in America. Philosophy, law, psychology, history, anti-Semitism, proselytism, intermarriage, public policy, the State of Israel, and whether Christians can be trusted — these and other subjects are addressed in lively, diverse, and frequently provocative ways.

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was Germany itself. Though he may not have succeeded in annihilating his own people, he did succeed in destroying the German Reich and, with it, any possibility of a legitimate German patriotism. In saying this, Haffner was questioning the entire postwar German settlement, based as it was (and is) on the creation of a new European federation in which German nationalism of any kind would be anathema. Today, more than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, we are only beginning to appreciate some of the more disturbing consequences of this act of national self-negation.

If *The Meaning of Hitler* is Haffner's swan song, it is also, in a sense, the sequel to *Defying Hitler*, the early masterpiece that he had put aside. The continuity consists not merely in Haffner's preoccupation with Hitler and the Nazis—phenomena that he actually found it distasteful to write about—but in the wounded pride of a conservative patriot protesting against an arch-traitor. For, long before they laid waste to Europe, the Nazis had destroyed Germany's spirit—and the Germans had hardly lifted a finger to prevent them.

The Meaning of Hitler had glossed over this last point to concentrate on Hitler's betrayal of Germany, rather than the Germans' betrayal of themselves. At the time, this gave the impression to some readers that Haffner was making excuses for the Germans. I well remember how bitterly his own daughter, the painter Sarah Haffner, denounced what she took to be her father's apologia for the German nation when I met her in Berlin in 1979. But the posthumous publication of *Defying Hitler*, edited (and now translated into English) by her brother Oliver Pretzel, proves that Haffner was doing nothing of the kind: *this* book is not an apologia for the Germans, but an indictment.

"THIS IS the story of a duel." The opening line, instantly dramatizing Haffner's own struggle as a microcosm of the thousands of individuals crushed by the Nazi juggernaut, introduces an underlying theme of the book: the dialectic between private and public events. Following a prologue, Haffner takes us from 1914, when he was seven, to the accession of the Nazis to power in 1933.

His child's-eye view of World War I tells us much about the genesis of Nazism. Boys like the young Raimund Pretzel experienced the war as a great game, a game in which death and malnutrition were disregarded and defeat was inconceivable. When it nevertheless came, Haffner, again speaking for his generation, took it hard. He contrasts Hitler's reaction at age twenty-nine to his own at age eleven—in "the one fury, defiance, and the resolve to become a politician, [in] the other doubt as to the validity of the rules of the game, and a horrified foreboding of the unpredictability of life."

Haffner's account of his young manhood in the Weimar Republic is quite brilliant, capturing the tragicomic, bittersweet unreality of those years: the Nazi revolution and the Kapp putsch (a radical right-wing attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic in March 1920), the 1922 assassination of the foreign minister Walter Rathenau and the runaway inflation. Many pillars of society, including Haffner's father, suffered, but many others prospered in the economic chaos, directing their resentment rather at the period of relative normality under Gustav Stresemann.

Hitler, Haffner writes of these Weimar years, "appealed to the two great experiences that had marked the younger generation": the "great war game" of 1914-18 and the "triumphal anarchic looting" of the 1923 inflation. In this twin appeal lay, in essence, the Nazis' foreign and domestic policies.

The climax of the book is the advent of the Third Reich, depicted in a series of vignettes. Haffner was by this time a law clerk at the Prussian

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Supreme Court, which, proud of its independent tradition, initially remained a haven of sanity. But the full horror of what was happening to Germany was brought home to him as early as March 1933 when the courthouse was invaded by the Nazi SA, who proceeded to throw out the Jewish lawyers and judges—to the laughter of others. One Jewish attorney, a one-eyed war veteran, refused to leave and was beaten up: "it had probably been his misfortune that he still remembered the tone to use with mutineers." When a brownshirt approached Haffner at his desk and demanded to know whether he was Aryan, he replied, flustered, "Yes," instantly regretting his own moral cowardice. "I had failed my very first test."

At the time, Haffner was having an affair with a Jewish girl named Charlie, through whom he saw into the heart of the terrible agony of her people. In one particularly surreal scene in the Grunewald woods, a succession of high-school students passed them, shouting the Nazi slogan, "*Juda verrecke!*" ("Judah perish!"). "We kissed and caressed each other, and every so often a group of boys went past and cheerfully told us to perish."

Here as elsewhere Haffner gives ample proof of his own awareness, very early on, that Hitler was in deadly earnest about his plans for the Jews—and of the significance of those plans for the future of civilization itself:

> It is something new in the history of the world: an attempt to deny humans the solidarity of every species that enables it to survive. . . . The Nazis' anti-Semitism is a fundamental danger and raises the spectre of the downfall of humanity.

It is of interest to note that when *Defying Hitler* was published in Germany in 2000, clairvoyant passages like this one gave rise to the suspicion that either Haffner or his heirs had at some point rewritten the manuscript with the benefit of hindsight. The family was even obliged to have the prewar origin of the text authenticated scientifically. Yet one has only to read Haffner's wartime book, *Germany: Jekyll and Hyde*, published in 1940 and arguing for the breakup of Germany into smaller units lest the country sink forever under the Nazi threat, to realize the absurdity of such accusations.

The text of *Defying Hitler*, now augmented by the six previously unpublished chapters, ends with Haffner's experience of a Nazi indoctrination camp which, together with his cohort of young attorneys, he was compelled to attend in the summer of 1933 if he wished to take his examinations and continue a career in law. Haffner felt deeply ashamed to be wearing a swastika armband and marching to the orders of SA

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thugs, but he submitted like the rest. On the evening of the day Hitler announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the abolition of all parties other than the National Socialists, they all sat together listening to the Fuehrer, "the invisible man in the radio" who was manipulating them like puppets, and Haffner realized that, in the sinister camaraderie of the camp where no one knew who secretly believed what, each had become the Gestapo of the others.

Fragmentary, colloquial, sometimes juvenile, *Defying Hitler* has more to say about the enduring enigma of Hitler's Reich than almost anything else in the voluminous modern literature on the subject. "What became of the Germans?" Haffner asks. It is the right question. I cannot think of another book that shows us, so concisely and so eloquently, what became of them, and how and why they became Nazis.

Martial Art

Supreme Command:
Soldiers, Statesmen, and
Leadership in Wartime
by Eliot A. Cohen
Free Press. 320 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Victor Davis Hanson

IN HIS influential 1957 study, *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel Huntington codified the main doctrines of American civilian control of the military. Ideally, wrote Huntington, judicious politicians should set the long-term goals of war, outline the general parameters of action, and then, exercising minimal restraint, let professional military men conduct the kind of war they know best how to wage. Eliot Cohen, a historian of military strategy at Johns Hopkins, cites Huntington's work as the best statement of the "normal" and accepted theory of civilian-military relations. But in a series of original and well-argued case histories, he also shows how warfighting itself is far too important an enterprise to be left entirely to the generals.

Cohen gives us four portraits—of Abraham Lincoln closely monitoring his squabbling Union generals during the American Civil War; of French premier Georges Clemenceau in face-to-face battle with Generals Foch and Pétain in World War I; of Winston Churchill's active interference with his commanders in almost every theater during World War II; and of David Ben-Gurion at work creating the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at the birth of the Jewish state. From these case histories, he establishes a different blueprint for the ideal political leadership of a wartime military.

WITHOUT LINCOLN, it is hard to see how Northern armies could have won on the battlefield. Far more so than his generals, the President grasped immediately the long-term value of the telegraph, the railroad, and rifled weapons. By late 1864, these innovations had ensured that Union troops would enjoy superior mobility, superior communications, and superior firepower—and it was thanks to Lincoln's own hands-on effort that they were made available to the army en masse. Moreover, Lincoln's ideas for squeezing the South went beyond the original and rather restricted plans of his generals; as he correctly saw, success would involve putting an end to the export of cotton, capturing an iconic city like Atlanta, and creating a tandem effect by having the tenacious bulldog Ulysses S.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON *is the author most recently of* An Autumn of War: What America Learned from September 11 and the War on Terrorism *and is the recipient of this year's Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Journalism.*

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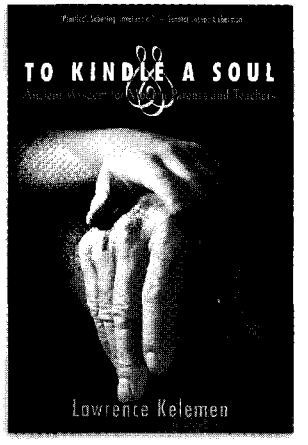
Grant barking ferociously at the South's front door while William Tecumseh Sherman ran wildly to the rear.

Cohen's portrait of Lincoln the supreme commander is masterful. He stumbles only once—in not fully crediting Sherman for his revolutionary march through Georgia and the Carolinas, an action that more than anything else brought the war to a close in the spring of 1865. Grant opposed the march, and so did other major Union generals like George Henry Thomas. Lincoln himself had little say in the decision to make this radical advance through the Confederate hinterland, shrugging that he knew which "hole" Sherman had gone into but not the one from which he would emerge.

One does not normally associate Georges Clemenceau, Cohen's second case study, with adroitness in human relations or with military acumen, but rather with obstinacy and a fierce parochial determination to promote French interests in the Versailles peace negotiations of 1919 at the expense of both the defeated Germans and France's own allies. But Cohen demonstrates that throughout the last year of the war itself, Clemenceau was able successfully to play off against each other the differing talents of his two main generals, promoting Henri Pétain's cautious tactical genius in a manner that did not obstruct the more aggressive strategic goals of Ferdinand Foch. Far from being an accidental premier who stumbled into power after the battlefield catastrophes of 1917, the rotund seventy-six-year-old Clemenceau was an adroit supergeneral who nearly alone in France saw to it that, despite mutiny and defeat, the enormous sacrifices at Verdun would not prove wasted. "I will fight in front of Paris, I will fight in Paris, I will fight behind Paris," he roared to his ministers in real, not feigned, trust in the abilities of the French soldier.



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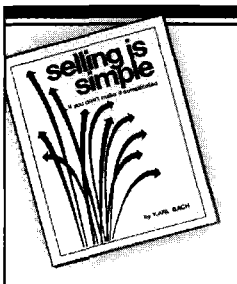

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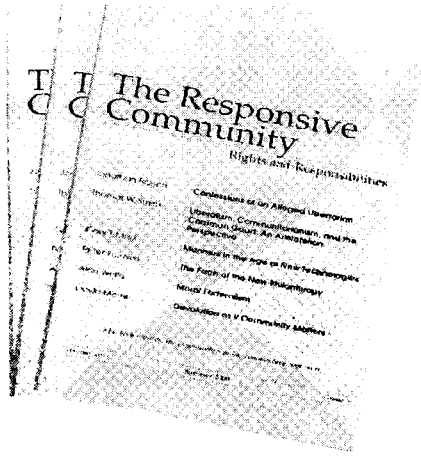

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Then there was Churchill. If Lincoln used blunt personal letters to set his generals straight, and Clemenceau traveled to the front to take the pulse of the war, Churchill proved an intrusive busybody, prone to calling his captains at all hours of the night, asking inane questions, promoting hare-brained schemes and weird impractical weaponry. So the conventional wisdom goes—-an oversimplification based in part on Churchill's blunders in Norway and his initial opposition to the Normandy invasion. But as Cohen rightly argues, all this restless and misdirected energy, including the much publicized drinking and the insomniac telephoning, was a small price to pay in exchange for the learning, experience, and intellectual brilliance that Churchill brought to the day-to-day conduct of the war in Europe and the Pacific.

No other Englishman could have honed the Anglo-American alliance to such critical effect; none knew so well the strengths and weaknesses of the British Commonwealth or how to mobilize its often shaky resources; and few learned better how to interrogate Montgomery, Tedder, Cunningham, Brooke, and others—cutting through their vanities, reminding them of their areas of ignorance, often saving them from themselves and the real damage they otherwise might have inflicted on thousands of their troops. By widening the analytic focus beyond the well-worn themes of Churchill's vitality and rhetorical genius, Cohen succeeds in debunking the myth of an inspirational but otherwise over-the-hill amateur whose advice was correctly ignored by his professional subordinates.

But it is David Ben-Gurion who, of Cohen's four leaders, was perhaps the most brilliant and the most difficult of all. As Israel's first prime minister and guiding spirit in the 1948-49 War of Independence, Ben-Gurion used the device of the "seminar"—literally stopping government business for weeks at a time to interview personally commando leaders, veterans, and traditional officers—as a means of weeding out incompetents, promoting men of genius, and bringing bitter rivals into broad agreement. In place of the chaotic competition among the Haganah, originally a loose organization of Zionist military groups, and the sometimes suspect Lehi and Irgun—both originally underground and terrorist commando factions—Ben-Gurion molded the Israel Defense Forces into a professional military based on European and American models, an army disciplined enough to ensure Israel's survival against deadly and far more numerous enemies.

More importantly still, Ben-Gurion understood better than his front-line officers the military liabilities of the nascent Israeli national character—strains of pacifism, an emphasis on intellectual rather than physical prowess, naive trust in international peacekeeping, utopian socialism, and a residual fatalism brought on by the great European tragedy of only a few years earlier. He saw that such mentalities could be lethal to a nation that would have to fight repeatedly on all fronts for its very existence, and he ruthlessly ejected Communist zealots and wide-eyed idealists alike from positions of military responsibility.

Cohen ends his book by contrasting his four case studies with more recent examples—or, rather, counterexamples—of American civilian leadership: in Vietnam, the Gulf war, and Bosnia. True, Lyndon Johnson himself occasionally picked targets for bombing in Vietnam, but that paled in comparison with the near-reckless latitude given to General William Westmoreland in crafting American strategy; the combination of limitless supplies and enormous manpower allowed a terrible margin of tactical and strategic incompetence to grow unchecked. In the Gulf war, the first Bush administration turned over too much of the

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conduct of the fighting to Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Washington and General Norman Schwarzkopf in the desert—to good tactical effect but ultimately to strategic failure. (The Clinton White House would repeat this error in Bosnia.) Schwarzkopf knew how to win a war and get home but not how to win a more lasting peace; Powell assured the cabinet that he knew best how to direct his generals but in fact had no clue as to the importance of taking Baghdad, the ultimate danger of Saddam Hussein's continued rule, or the disastrous public-relations fiasco of allowing a supposedly defeated Iraqi dictator to butcher innocents while the victorious but impotent Americans stood on the sidelines.

Supreme Command ends with a careful dissection of Samuel Huntington's ideas—a somewhat more academic exercise than what has gone before. Here Cohen hints at but does not really show why we have no more Lincolns, Churchills, Clemenceaus, or Ben-Gurions. All four were voracious readers, often self-taught and naturally inquisitive. Masterful politicians, they had an instinctual intimacy with—and yet a distrust of—military bureaucracy. Certainly none of the four was awed by jargon, superficial expertise, or the bluster of staff. All were masterful orators and engaging writers; they understood their task not only as arousing a nation to arms but also as instilling spirit in their own officers, who too often saw war as a science rather than an art. We tend to forget that timidity and self-doubt are pathologies as frequently found among officers as are the supposedly more natural sins of bellicosity and recklessness.

Eliot Cohen's revisionist thesis is especially timely after the first Bush and Clinton presidencies, both of which—the former out of naive trust, the latter perhaps out of fear or ignorance—handed over the operations of their respective wars almost entirely to an overly cautious military. Cohen is surely right that we need to develop different—more traditional—attitudes and protocols concerning the military-civilian partnership. Let us hope, however, that the problem lies with inculcating such habits and not with war leaders themselves. And let us hope that Lincoln, Churchill, Clemenceau, and Ben-Gurion were not singular products of a now lost classical approach to education, a rare creed of self-discipline, and a tragic rather than a therapeutic sense of men at war—in other words, that they were not representative of a species of statesman whose like most of us have not seen in our lifetimes and may not see again.

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The Challenges of Charter Schools

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and president, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Charter schools are now ten years old, and the movement is still spreading. About 2,400 charter schools have been operating in 2001–2002. A handful of cities now find 15–20 percent of their kids enrolled in charters. Yet **some of the wind is going out of the charter schools' sails.** Six challenges are paramount.

First, we see too little leadership in the charter movement. The concept of charter schools was dismissed at the last national education summit on October 9–10, 2001, in New York. The Bush White House rarely mentions charters. Few governors tarry long on this subject—and many admit to frustration over "bad apples" in the charter barrel. There's no coherent national voice explaining this reform idea to Congress, the media, or other educators.

Second, although not large, the bad-apple problem is easily exploited by critics. Most states have a few charters that never should have been allowed to start and a few more that cannot sustain the pace. What to do? Too many states—instead of promptly replacing hapless schools with better ones—are slowing the whole charter enterprise and putting bureaucrats in charge of it. Because the top concern of bureaucrats is to fend off future problems, the red tape piles up.

Third, even without added rules and regulations, it is hard to start a charter school. The *New York Times* recently recounted an unsuccessful three-year effort by would-be charter school founders in the South Bronx, whose dream of starting an arts-oriented charter was stymied by state and city bureaucrats, facility woes, and a lack of start-up funds.

Fourth, charter enemies are relentless. Their favorite strategies are to keep numerical caps in place on the grounds that "this risky experiment hasn't proven itself" while persuading policymakers (in the name of "ensuring accountability" or "leveling the playing field") that charters must be subject to ever more of the same requirements as regular public schools.

Fifth, charter advocates have not been smart enough about accountability, probably because they're split on the subject. We find libertarians insisting that the marketplace is a sufficient accountability mechanism; dyed-in-the-wool public educators being swayed by "level playing field" claims even though responding to such claims often brings stultifying red tape; and people resisting state standards and tests for the same reasons that other educators resist them

Finally, **the charter movement itself cannot decide whether it is a trade association obliged to defend every school that wears the charter label or an education reform movement responsible for ensuring that only good schools are so labeled.**

These challenges are worth meeting. The promise of charter schools remains bright. The *National Journal*'s Jonathan Rauch recently profiled Nueva Esperanza Academy, a charter school serving Philadelphia's Latino community and one of as many as fifty such schools being developed by the National Council of La Raza. The academy is bringing low-income high school dropouts back into education The school's name means "New Hope," which is how many charter advocates see their movement. But hope alone won't get it successfully through another ten years

— Chester E. Finn Jr

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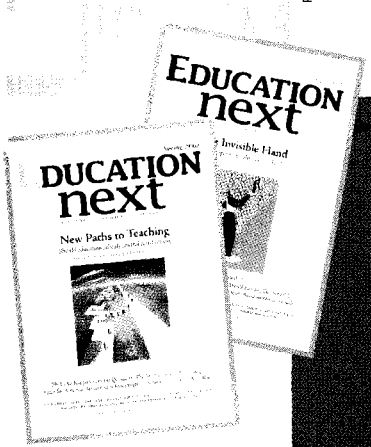

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Are Innovative Medicines Worth the Higher Price?

by Frank R. Lichtenberg

The cost of prescription drugs has helped to lift healthcare reform to the top of the policy agenda in the U.S. Congress and state governments. Higher spending on innovative medicines has led some legislators to advocate restrictive Medicaid formularies, reimportation of low-priced drugs from abroad, and even explicit price controls on pharmaceuticals. But policymakers don't always consider whether the benefits of new medicines outweigh their higher prices. Fortunately, sound quantitative analysis exists to help answer this important question.

It's true that spending in the United States on prescription drugs has grown dramatically in recent years. Previous studies have shown that the replacement of older drugs by newer, more expensive ones is the single most important reason for this increase. However, those studies did not examine the extent to which price differences between new and old drugs reflect changes in quality. Newer medicines tend to be more effective than older ones in treating the same medical condition.

In a recent study, I analyzed prescribed-medicine data from the 1996 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) to examine the effect of drug age – i.e., the number of years since the drug's active ingredient was first approved by the Food and Drug Administration – on mortality, morbidity, and total medical expenditure. The MEPS is a nationally representative survey of healthcare use, expenditures, sources of payment, and insurance coverage for the U.S. civilian non-institutionalized population.

The MEPS data allow us to control for many important attributes of the individual patient, his or her medical condition, and the prescription. These attributes include sex, age, education, race, income, insurance status, the payer for the drug, the medical condition for which the drug was prescribed, the duration of the condition, and the number of conditions reported by the patient. Indeed, the fact that many individuals in the sample had multiple medical conditions and multiple prescriptions means that we can control for all individual characteristics, both observed and unobserved.

Newer drugs offer not only health benefits to patients, but also long-run fiscal benefits to public health service

The results of the analysis strongly support the hypothesis that the use of newer rather than older drugs reduces mortality (i.e., death of the patient), morbidity (i.e., loss of work-days), and total medical expenditure. Although the mortality rate in the MEPS sample is quite low, I found that people consuming new drugs were significantly less likely to die by the end of the survey than were people consuming older drugs. This result is consistent with previous studies showing a highly significant positive relationship across diseases between mortality reduction and the use of new pharmaceuticals. As to morbidity, I found that people consuming new drugs were significantly less likely to miss work or school days than people consuming old drugs, although the estimated effect was not very large.

The study also demonstrates that the use of newer drugs tends to reduce all types of non-drug medical expenditure, with inpatient hospital spending (the most costly type) showing by far the largest reduction. The data indicate that use of newer drugs is associated with shorter (and therefore less expensive), as well as fewer, hospital stays. The total estimated reduction in non-drug expenditure from using newer rather than older drugs is almost four times as large as the increase in drug expenditure. Consequently, using newer drugs results in a substantial net reduction in the total cost of treating the condition.

It's not surprising that policymakers focus their efforts to control public healthcare expenditure on drug spending. The costs of pharmaceuticals (and changes in those costs) are visible to the naked eye, while those in other segments of the healthcare system are hidden. As the MEPS analysis shows, innovative medicines are more cost-effective than older alternatives. Newer drugs offer not only health benefits to patients, but also long-run fiscal benefits to public health services. Identification of those benefits requires careful analysis of good data. It's vital that public officials making drug policy decisions consider the full range of benefits, not just the costs, of newer drugs.

Frank R. Lichtenberg is Courtney C. Brown Professor of Business at Columbia University, and Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. ***This piece is based on Dr. Lichtenberg's article entitled "The Benefits and Costs of Newer Drugs: Evidence From the 1996 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey." The full article, which appeared in the September/October 2001 issue of*** **Health Affairs,** ***can be found at http://www.healthaffairs.org***

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